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"You go Hum," said the Deacon (page 17).

THE NIMBLE DOLLAR

WITH OTHER STORIES

BY

CHARLES MINER THOMPSON

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge
1895

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The Riverside Press, Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A.
Electrotyped and Printed by H. O. Houghton & Co.

TO THE

MEMORY OF MY MOTHER.

NOTE.

THE plot of "A Tangled Web" is taken from a German farce which has been translated into English under the title of "The Gray Mare."

THE AUTHOR.

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THE NIMBLE DOLLAR

I

Mr. Alvin Josselyn was counting small bills and trying to talk to the sheriff at the same time.

"*One, two, and two's four, and one's five, six*," he said rapidly, and paused to wet his finger, but did not. "I supposed," he remarked, in a high complaining drawl, and with his finger suspended, "that I was a-living among honest folks, not a passel of scallywags, not to say thieves out and out. I've been in this store man and boy nigh on to forty year, and I hain't never cheated nobody far's I know, and nobody hain't ever cheated me, nor stole from me nuther. And now here I be losing money right *and* left. The last time five dollars was took, 'most. I can't stand such peculation long without going to the poor farm, and a mighty poor farm it is, too, seeing what ain't stumps is boulders."

The wet fingers descended. "*Six and two 's eight, nine!*"

He pushed his old straw hat back from his forehead with a gesture of perplexity. "Did n't I make it ten dollars afore, Si?" he asked.

"I guess so," said Si Gordon, the sheriff, "I wa'n't noticing partic'lar. I 'm here about the dooties of my office, I guess. What I want is the partic'lars of this here stealing business. What number of bills you 've got ain't none of my present consarn."

"Well, of course, of course," returned the storekeeper, resuming his talk, and wetting his finger at the same time. "Well, ye see, 't was jest this way — *one, two, and two 's four*," — and he paused with his finger on the next bill. "There wa'n't much, but it 's gone, no two ways about it, and like 's not, it 'll continner to go — *four, five.*"

"Did ye do as I told ye?" interrupted the sheriff.

"Yes, I did," said Mr. Josselyn, "*five and two 's seven* — ye recollect that drummer feller, don't ye? Well, — *six, seven and two 's nine* — he happens round 'bout once in so

often — *and two 's eleven* — Drat it, there 's eleven this time. *One, two and two 's* " —

"Oh, quit your counting, can't ye," said the sheriff, "and give me the facts. 'T ain't 'cording to the dignity of the law to be put off so. It would be a pious idee if you 'd just 'tend to your knitting, and give me the facts I 'm atter, seem 's though it would."

"*Four*," said Mr. Josselyn, completing his phrase. "Of course, I 'm telling of ye jest as fast as I can, only these pesky bills put me out. *And two 's six, and one 's seven* — well, that drummer chap was in here t'other day jest as I happened to be lookin' round for some odd coin or other — *and one 's eight, nine.* I guessed there wa'n't no harm in telling on him the facts in the case, seeing he wa'n't a native, and not in town when the crime was committed. Anyhow I told him — *and two 's eleven.* ' If ye want a marked coin to catch your thief with,' says he, ' try that,' says he, and he chucked out a dollar. There wa'n't nothing partic'lar strange 'bout it, as far as I could see, and I says so. ' Look at the date,' says he — *and one 's twelve* — Oh, to tophet with these bills, the old scratch is in 'em. They come different every time."

Mr. Josselyn sank into a chair in disgust and discouragement. "There don't nothing go right," he said, "nor come right nuther, since this affliction. I 'm getting to feel dretful peekid," and he regarded the sheriff hopelessly with his faded blue eyes.

"What was the date?" asked the sheriff.

"The date," echoed Mr. Josselyn, whose mind was utterly confused, "what date?"

"Now look ahere," said the sheriff with decision, "you just quit them bills. When I 'm gone, you can count 'em so 's they 'll stay counted. I mean the date of the dollar the drummer give ye. He must be a zany to be throwing round money that way, seems though. What did ye give him for it?"

"I didn't give him nothing for it," answered Mr. Josselyn. "He 's a dretful generous feller, and gits a big salary, nigh on to twelve hundred, I 've heard, though that 's pretty big, seems though it was, for what he does, just traveling round."

"Humph," said the sheriff. Then, as the storekeeper laid hand on the bills once more, and started to wet his finger, he added, sharply, "Here, Alvin, don't ye tech them bills!"

Mr. Josselyn dropped them meekly. "The date was 1804," he said, as if frightened into direct speech.

"Well," said Si urgently.

"Well," Mr. Josselyn resumed, "the drummer feller, he wanted to know if I ever see one of them afore, and come to think on it, I never did see none. 'They 're skurce,' says he, 'and when you find a feller with one of them in his pants, you 've got your thief,' says he."

"You can't prove nothin' by just a date," said the sheriff scornfully.

"I dunno; maybe you can't," answered the storekeeper. "I tuk his word for it. Only I just scratched a cross on to one side, just to make sartin, — you might as well be keerful while you 're about it, — and put it in the till. But it 's took to itself wings, and I guess all the rest I 've got will foller it, though I dunno what I done" —

"When did it go?" asked the sheriff.

"To-day, 'bout high noon."

"D' ye suspicion anybody?"

"Well," said Mr. Josselyn, with reluctance, "I dunno but that good-for-nothing

Bill Young knows something about it. The old man ain't much account nohow, except for fishing. And I guess the young one is a good deal like him, — any of them Youngs would as soon steal as not. They 're meaner 'n tunket, the hull lot on 'em."

"There ain't no proof in that," said the sheriff, with a superior air.

"I ain't saying there is," said Mr. Josselyn meekly. "Only it kind of creates a presumption, don't it? Wall, Bill was round here to-day, and I kind of thought he 'd hang himself if I give him rope enough, so I just asked him to tend store while I went to dinner. I guess he took it then. Leastways it wa'n't there when I got back, — nor Bill nuther."

"It 's clear as daylight," said Si. "I 'll 'tend to that young man."

"Well, I wish 't you would," returned Mr. Josselyn, with a sigh. "Trade ain't so particular good that I kin afford to have things stole right and left."

"I 'll go right over to Young's now," said the sheriff, and left the store.

Mr. Josselyn stepped out on to the porch,

and stood watching Si climb into his rickety buggy.

"That 's a good horse ye got there," said he, recognizing the fact through force of habit, but, owing to his depressed spirits, without enthusiasm.

"So-so," replied Gordon, trying not to appear touched by the compliment to his beast. "I guess I 'll be back with that young scallawag — or that scallawag Young, if ye prefer it that way — along the end of the atternoon. Ged up," he added to his horse, and drove smartly off up the road.

Mr. Josselyn, looking pathetic and meek in his long linen duster, and with his old straw hat, which he had worn in the store as long as he could remember, shading his old blue eyes and softly wrinkled face, gazed vacantly up and down the dusty road. Across the street were two or three houses and a church all painted white and checkered with tightly-closed green blinds. The church had a tin-covered steeple which radiated the heat and light of the hot August day so that it made you uncomfortable to look at it. Under the lilac bushes near one of the houses, a few

hens could be seen "dusting." From a little blacksmith shop farther up the road came the ring of a hammer upon iron, — a monotonous *cling-cling*, *ching — ching*, *cling*, *ching-ching*. In a grove of maple trees stood a small, red schoolhouse. The windows were open, and you divined that school was in session.

An old man was making his way toward the store through the dust. Josselyn recognized him as old Abe Mansfield, and as the first of the loafers who always gathered upon the porch of the store on afternoons. He reflected with resignation that there would be no profit in this visitor, but was mildly glad to see him coming; he did not like to sit in his store "all sole alone." He watched Abe a minute, and then went inside.

Soon he heard Abe's two canes thumping on the steps. The noise ceased, and Josselyn had a mental vision of the old fellow settling laboriously into one of the scarred wooden armchairs on the porch. He went out for a moment to bid the old man good-day.

After a while, others came: Deacon Snow, Lucas Nye, and Sam Marvin. They sat about and talked of the crops and the drought

and told stories of hunting and fishing or anecdotes about former inhabitants of the village. Over these there was much chuckling, though none of them was new.

Presently some boys released from school sat down on the turf under a tree at one corner of the store to play "stick-knife." Each was clothed in two garments; a print shirt, to wit, and a pair of trousers. Each had on a big straw hat. Each had brown, bare feet. Those who were not black from sun and wind were freckled. They promptly tired of stick-knife, and moving over to the porch sat on its edge with their legs hanging over, and giggled both at and with their elders. For the most part, however, they kept decorously quiet, and when one of the men looked at them, became at once preternaturally solemn.

They grew restless at length, and began to push and jostle each other. Johnny Snow suddenly pitched off the porch. "Quit that now," he exclaimed sharply, as he fell. But he was only jeered at, and the boys, crowding closely together, would not let him get back again to his place. So Johnny tried to create a diversion. Darting upon them unexpect-

edly, he tapped one on the shoulder and started away at a run, crying "You 're it!" But he was not followed. His mates kept their seats, grinning. So he stopped and stared at them a minute uncertainly. "Ho!" he said at length, as if he had reached a conclusion, "who cares for you fellows!" Then he turned two cartwheels toward the porch, and flung himself down near the steps. There a small pamphlet attracted his attention. He picked it up, and began to read it. First one and then another of his friends reached forward a bare toe, and tipped his hat over his eyes. Apparently he did not mind this annoyance, but, pushing his hat back as often as it was shoved forward, continued to read.

What he read was an old catalogue of prices of rare coins. He was amazed to find that some coins were worth very much more than their face value. He read that the dollar of 1804 was "very rare," and that it was valued at eight hundred dollars!

"Cricky, fellows!" he suddenly exclaimed, his face shining with excitement, "what d 'ye think the dollar of 1804 is worth?"

"A hundred cents," said Willie Nye, from his perch on the porch, with severe sarcasm.

"No sir-ree," retorted Johnny, "it 's worth eight hundred dollars!"

"Eight hundred lambs' tails," replied Willie, "you can't stuff us!"

"'T is too, worth that," reiterated Johnny, "and I can prove it."

"Huh! like a hen you can!" said Tim Mansfield. All the boys laughed.

"Oh, sho, now, g'long!" added Willie Nye. Not content with this scoff, he reached out his toe and tried to push Johnny's hat once more over his eyes. But Johnny promptly seized him by the ankle, and pulled him on to the grass. "You let my hat be, now, or I 'll fix you," he said, with quick anger.

With a shout of derision, Willie knocked the hat off with his hand, and dodged out of its owner's way. As Johnny stooped to pick it up, Tim Mansfield kicked it out of his reach. Andy Hodgkins grabbed it then, and threw it over Johnny's head. Johnny turned and caught Willie Nye's arm just as he was about to throw the hat back. The two boys clenched, fell, and rolled on the grass. Both

were angry; each intended as soon as he was free from the other's grasp, to pound the other well.

But Deacon Snow interfered. "Here you," he called, "quit your scuffling there, or I 'll take a hand in that fight myself. Johnny, you behave, if you don't wanter git sent hum."

"Well, they need n't pick on me," said Johnny. "I ain't going to be trompled on, not for nobody."

"Willie, you come here and set down," spoke up Lucas Nye. "When I want you fighting, I 'll tell ye. What you want to be picking onto a feller littler than you be for, anyhow?"

"He said the dollar of 1804 's worth eight hundred dollars," said William defensively.

"'T is," said Johnny.

"Well, s'posing he did," said Mr. Nye, "there ain't any call for you to fight him for talking foolish, far 's I kin see. You 'll have a pretty tough job if you go through life on that principle."

"Johnny," said Deacon Snow portentously, "come here."

He looked like a big owl, with his great, round spectacles, Horace Greeley beard, and prominent, sharp nose.

"Look out, Johnny," whispered Tim Mansfield, giggling, "or he 'll peck ye."

"Johnny," said the deacon, "what be you a-telling such lies for? Stands to reason, a dollar ain't wuth more 'n a dollar. I never ketched ye lying afore, not that I knows on. What, in the name of Goshen, d' ye mean by it?"

"I ain't lying," said Johnny, with indignation. "It says so in the book."

"What book?" asked the deacon. "Don't ye go to lying to me now."

Johnny picked up the catalogue which had been badly mussed by the boys in their scuffle, straightened out its bent pages, found the place, and handed it to his grandfather. The deacon took it carefully and laid it back up upon his knee while he pulled out and adjusted his reading spectacles upon his nose. He read with close attention what related to the dollar of 1804, turned back and read the title-page of the pamphlet with knitted brows, and then read the entry concerning the coin

in question again. At length, letting the book fall to his knee, but holding it firmly open at the place with his horny old thumb, he glared at Johnny a moment over his glasses.

"Well," said he at length, "I guess ye wa'n't lying as far 's ye knew. Where 'd ye git this book?"

"Found it," said Johnny, who was not yet mollified.

"Where 'd ye find it?" said the deacon.

"Alongside the steps there," said Johnny, with a vaguely indicative gesture.

"Humph," said the deacon.

With his hands in his pockets, and his straw hat pushed far back on his head, Johnny faced his grandfather unabashed. The other boys were sitting in a solemn row, like so many young owls on a rafter, on the edge of the porch; but, in fact, there was much suppressed excitement among them. This had risen in a hope that Johnny was to receive condign punishment then and there. The hope arose not at all from any ill will to Johnny, or from any enjoyment of others' suffering as such, but simply from a liking

for an exciting scene of whatever kind. Johnny perfectly understood their feeling, and was quite resolved that, should the punishment come, he would treat his companions to an exhibition of honorable fortitude. When, however, the deacon announced that the book bore out Johnny in his statement, this feeling gave place to intense interest in the wonderful dollar. All the boys began to imagine themselves in some unlikely way or other becoming possessors of the dollar of 1804. The old men, too, had suspended their own talk, and were closely watching the deacon and the book.

Lucas Nye asked the question which was uppermost in all their minds.

"Does it say there," said he, "that the dollar of 1804 is wuth eight hundred dollars?"

"It does, sartin," answered the deacon. And still holding the book at arm's length firmly open between the rough old thumb and stiff fingers of his left hand, he slowly moved the index finger of his right hand until it rested on the entry.

Lucas Nye read it carefully. "Sho," he

said at length. Then Sam Marvin and old Abe Mansfield were allowed to look at it in turn. Sam Marvin said "Du tell," and old Abe Mansfield, after having gazed at the entry what to any one but these slow old fellows would have seemed an interminable time, settled back into his chair in painful relief and ejaculated, "Well, I swanny!" In short, the news made a sensation.

The boys followed the book as it passed from hand to hand, with yearning eyes; but no one of them dared ask for a peep into it. They knew, however, that talk over the astounding fact would follow, and consoled themselves by resolving to listen with all their ears. Johnny leaped upon the porch, and with a leg and arm twined about one of the supporting posts enjoyed the sensation his discovery had created. He felt superior to the other boys just then; he had furnished the excitement; he had been vindicated by his elders; he was the only boy who had read the entry concerning the wonderful dollar.

He had made a mistake, however, in taking so conspicuous a position, since in doing so, he attracted the attention of his grandfather

again. "You go hum," said the deacon. "What you loafing round here for, anyhow? Did n't I tell ye to tend to hoeing them taters?"

The imperative old man meant what he said, as poor Johnny discovered by a single glance at his face. So, reluctantly and slowly, he turned away and started homeward. The tears came into his eyes; to be sent home on the most interesting occasion he had ever known at the store, and when he was in a way a prominent figure, was quite, quite too much.

"Who 'd be fool enough, d'ye s'pose, to give eight hundred dollars for one dollar?" inquired Mr. Nye, with a sniff.

"I guess it 's so, ain't it, deacon?" queried Sam Marvin.

"Ye see it in print, did n't ye?" answered the deacon, as if the fact were conclusive.

"I guess it 's so, fast enough," said old Abe Mansfield, in his slow, difficult speech. "I notice they say that dollar 's skurce. Well, now them city folks is queer. Now there was one of them fellers that 's fooling away their time over to the pond — said his name was Dana, if I recollect right, and I

guess I do, seems so, anyway — well, he come inquiring round, Dana did, to my house t'other day, and wanted to buy our old clock, — nothing else would suit him nohow, — said he 'd give twenty-five dollars for it down. Well, it 's a rattlety-bang old consarn, ain't been running nigh on to ten year, and I told him so. Says I, ' 'T ain't wuth it, not no such amount of money.' ' Well,' says he, ' that don't make a mite of diff'rence. Them clocks is skurce,' says he 'and, I want one.' Well, of course, I let him have it. I guess them clocks ain't no skurcer down to Boston than dollars is up here, says I to myself. And if he 's blamed fool enough to give that amount, after warning, 't ain't none of my tend-to. And that 's where 't is. Anything that 's skurce, them city folks wants. That dollar 's skurce, and they want that. At least, I guess that 's the way on't."

"Eight hundred 's a pretty big price, seems though it was," said the skeptical Mr. Marvin.

"'T is so," assented old Abe. "But in them things the price 's according to the skurcity."

"Them dollars must be skurce as hen's teeth, I guess," said Mr. Marvin.

"Where d' ye s'pose that there book come from, anyhow?" asked Sam Marvin.

"That man Dana must 'a' dropped it, I guess," said old Abe, "he was a-tellin' on me how he was a collector, I think he said he was; grabbed most any skurce thing that come handy, near 's I could make out. I guess he would n't have no great objection to coins, long with the rest on it."

Just then Mr. Josselyn came to the door of the store. He had been going through some accounts, and now, having finished his labor, was inclined to take a little fresh air — and stale gossip — along with his "customers." He was struck with their air of animation.

"Ye hain't got a dollar of 1804 in your till, have ye?" asked Mr. Marvin jocularly.

"Why, what d' ye mean?" answered the storekeeper quickly. His mind was full of the dollar that had been stolen from him that day. It occurred to him that the sheriff had not kept his mouth properly closed.

"'Cause if ye have," said Mr. Marvin, in a particularly slow drawl intended to empha-

size the humor he saw in his remark, "you 're wuth seven hundred and ninety-nine more dollars than ye think ye be!"

"What 's that ye say?" asked Mr. Josselyn, studying their faces to see where the joke lay.

"This here book," spoke up Deacon Snow, once more pointing to the pamphlet which he still held open under his strong old thumb, "says the 1804 dollar is wuth eight hundred dollars."

"Good land of Goshen! and I had one took from the till this noon!" cried Mr. Josselyn despairingly.

II

On the afternoon on which Mr. Josselyn made the momentous discovery that, when the dollar of 1804 was taken from his till, he was robbed not merely of one but of eight hundred dollars, Bill Young was walking homeward through the thick dust.

Bill was an estimable youth of some eighteen summers. His tall, lanky, loose-jointed form was clothed in a pair of old brown trousers supported by a single suspender-strap, a flannel shirt of no particular color, a pair of cowhide boots, and a wide-brimmed hat of coarse straw. His big, dirty, large-knuckled hands swung loosely at his sides like the swingels of flails. His head was bent downward as if he saw in the road something particularly interesting. His face was thin, his blue eyes sharp, shifty, and deep set. His nose was prominent and aquiline, his chin retreating, and his low forehead was thickly overhung with long, sandy hair. His face, neck, and

hands were brick-red from sunburn. His expression was not prepossessing, and there was something not quite honest-looking about the rounded shoulders and hanging head. He was the terror of the small boys, whom he bullied and tortured as often as he could lay hands upon them. When they descried him from afar, they hid; when they came upon him suddenly, they turned and fled.

The estimable William, by the exercise of such talents as he had, had won the proud position of leading reprobate of the community. His father, a weak man, had long resigned all claim to that bad eminence in favor of his son. In spite of his success, however, Bill was not happy. He knew himself hated and feared by the young people, despised and distrusted by the elders. He bore a grudge against the whole community, and that he could not pay it in full was distressing to his honest nature. Such is the disadvantage of a greatness such as Bill's.

However, at the moment, William was feeling pretty well satisfied with himself, for he had a dollar in his pocket which did not belong to him. It was the dollar of 1804.

Now he would have been in the seventh heaven of guilty bliss, and somewhere in the woods, had he known the real value of that dollar. But William's luck — which he proclaimed everywhere was "agin him" — denied him this knowledge. What satisfaction he had, moreover, was lessened by fear of discovery. He might be sent to the county jail, if it were known that he was the thief. Though Mr. Josselyn, in his opinion, was "pretty small potatoes" in point of wit and executive vigor, and the sheriff himself more powerful in his own conceit than in fact, they might possibly by laying their heads together manage to trap even so talented and astute a youth as himself.

As he trudged along, weighing his chances, his ease-loving disposition suggested to him that he would be more comfortable without his boots. So he stepped to the wall, seated himself and, with some grunting, succeeded in pulling them off. This proceeding disclosed the fact that stockings formed no part of William's summer wardrobe. Taking the boots by their straps in one hand, he resumed his walk barefooted.

Over the top of the hill in front of him — for in Vermont you are always either going up a hill or going down one — now appeared a man in a buggy. Bill recognized him at once as Si Gordon. It was indeed the sheriff returning from an unsuccessful visit to the farm of the Youngs in search of Bill himself.

William paused a moment. He was tempted to take to the woods. But he reflected with those quick wits of his, which were so great an ornament of his character, that the chances were very much against Gordon knowing anything about the theft so soon, that Gordon had probably seen him as quick as he had seen Gordon, and that, if so, his taking to the woods might be deemed a suspicious circumstance. At any rate, the proceeding would be unworthy a man of boldness and resolution.

Accordingly, he walked confidently on, swinging his boots in his hand, as who should say, Behold the trustfulness of an innocent mind! But first he shifted the dollar from his right to his left pocket, where he held it firmly in his closed hand. And he kept his sharp eyes stealthily on the sheriff. With

that caution which ever goes with true courage, he felt it wise to be prepared for emergencies.

"Whoa there!" said Gordon to his horse, as he came near. "Hello, Bill," he added to Young.

"Hello," said Bill gruffly, without stopping.

"Hold on there," said the sheriff, "don't you be in sich a rush. 'T ain't chore-time, and your house ain't on fire, for I just come from there."

Bill stopped and faced the sheriff.

"Jest step back here a mite," said Gordon. "I want to talk to ye a little. What ye so unsociable about, anyhow? Ye ain't afraid of the sheriff, be ye?"

Bill, thus urged, stepped quite close to the wheel, and stood there, looking sullen. He began to swing his boots against the tire. It gave him an excuse not to look the sheriff in the eye. His hand in his pocket clutched his ill-gotten dollar tightly.

"What d' ye want?" he said.

"Why, ye see," said the sheriff elaborately, "I hain't seen ye for so long that I kind of thought I 'd like a little talk with ye,

about matters and things. Been way up to your house to see ye, too, and it 's tur'ble hot driving, this weather. Hard on me, and hard on the hoss. I hate to stop him right here in the sun so, seeing he 's all of a lather. Why don't ye jump in and ride back to town with me, and then we kin talk sort of comfortable. What d' ye say?"

"I hain't got nothing to do in town, not as I knows on," said Bill.

By this time, the sheriff had looked Bill completely over. He had noticed that the boy kept his left hand stubbornly in his pocket. He could guess, too, from the bulge there that the hand was not open but closed. "Humph," said he to himself, "got it right there in his pocket, I 'll bet. Take a smarter chap than him to fool Si Gordon, I guess."

"Oh, I guess ye 've got suthin' t' git at th' store," he said aloud, with an air of much friendly insistence. He felt so sure of that dollar that he was inclined to joke Bill a little. "Your ma, now, she wanted some sody or suthin', I guess. You better go back and git it, seems though you had. Like 's not she 's depending on it for biscuit to-night."

"She don't want no sody," said Bill, inwardly uneasy, but preserving his unmoved, if sullen air.

"Well, then, it's saleratus or something," insisted the sheriff. "The women folks is always a-wanting something of the sort. If she didn't say anything about nothing, why then you can kind of surprise her with it. These little agreeable surprises is allers welkim to the women."

"I don't know as I want to go to town," said Bill.

"Well, I guess ye dew," said the sheriff, with an imperative inflection. He had amused himself enough now, and was ready to take his captive and the dollar into possession. He felt proud of his day's work. "Come, take your hand out of your pocket, and hop in. Come, in with ye!"

Bill cast an eye furtively about the landscape. He noted that as he faced the buggy, he stood directly in line with the boundary wall between the Snow and the Hodgkins farm, and that if he should face up the road, he would bring into line a maple-tree that stood in its first slight curve and an elm in the pasture beyond.

He slowly withdrew his hand from his pocket, and climbed into the buggy. The two then rode away together toward the village, and both were laughing in their sleeves, — the sheriff at the neatness of his capture, and Bill at the uselessness of it. For the dollar went not with the sheriff. No! there was a hole in William's pocket, and when that estimable youth withdrew his hand, the coin had slipped down his trouser-leg and fallen noiselessly in the dust, where it had been covered by a deft movement or so of his foot as he stepped into the buggy. Now, as the possession of the dollar was the only thing that could connect William with its theft, the sheriff — poor, deceived man! — was not the one who had the better reason for laughing.

The road now lay baking in the hot afternoon sun undisturbed for a long time by horse or man. Its dust was stirred only by a partridge which came forth circumspectly from the wood on the right to "dust" in it like any tame, plebeian hen, and by a squirrel which darted across it. Nor was there any sound to be heard except the slight, delicate carol of some warblers in the treetops, the

whines of a complaining catbird in a tangle of wild grapevine, and the sweetly melodious whistle of a field sparrow perched on a mullein stalk in the warm, boulder-strewn pasture on the left.

At length into this quiet burst Johnny Snow. He had forgotten the sorrow of his forced departure from the store even as he had forgotten the potatoes he was to hoe. He had been a long while on the way, quite long enough to forget these things. He had found two bird's-nests, both "old," chased a chipmunk into the wall, eaten unlimited raspberries, and searched a spruce-tree for gum. These be diversions to heal the wound of sorrow and to hush the voice of duty!

At present, both arms were bent at the elbow and gyrating rapidly, his downward bent bare toes were kicking up the dust, and from his mouth came the *chough*, *chough*, *chough* of an overworked locomotive on an up-grade. Mingling fact and fancy, he considered himself to be the passenger express three hours late. He stopped his puffing occasionally to give utterance to a very good imitation of the sound of a steam whistle. All this would

seem to be occupation enough for one boy, but, while his arms gyrated, his feet kicked up dust, and his mouth puffed or whistled, his mind was largely occupied with thoughts of a turkey hen at home whom he suspected of having stolen a nest. He intended to find that turkey's nest. He 'd put a bell round her neck if necessary, and then he 'd see what she 'd do.

He was thus occupied when he came directly abreast of the boundary wall between the Snow and the Hodgkins farm and directly in line with the maple-tree that stood in the first slight bend of the road and the elm in the pasture beyond.

Here he hit his toe on something hard which hurt.

"Ouch," he said, standing on one leg, and grasping the injured toe in his hand. "Train wreckers been a-putting a boulder on the track. I 'll have them jailed before night, — see if I don't!"

His glance wandered over the road in search of the "boulder." In the dust before him he saw a white gleam. He put his foot down at once, and hurriedly picked up the shining disk.

"Whoop!" he shouted after the first look at his prize; and with the dollar clutched tightly in one hand, he turned five cartwheels in succession up the road. The cartwheels made him somewhat dizzy. In attempting the sixth, he sat down hard in the middle of the road. Somewhat calmed by this expenditure of energy, and by the shock to his system in which it ended, he opened his fist to give more careful examination to the dollar. He looked at the date: it was 1804.

At this, he jumped to his feet, turned five more cartwheels, danced about, throwing his bare legs violently in every direction, and uttering a succession of Indian warcries. A cow in the pasture raised bland, astonished eyes upon him, and in her consternation let the grass drop from her foolishly open mouth. She gazed at him attentively a moment, then wheeled, tossed her heels and tail high in air, and started on a bee line for the far end of the pasture. The hawk, sailing calmly about far above, must have thought that the small human being below was having a new and elaborate kind of fit, and observed him with scientific curiosity, but without sympathy.

Johnny, however, saw neither the cow nor the hawk. All at once seized with the conviction that the dollar could not be that of 1804, he abruptly stopped his shouting and hopping, and examined the coin again. There was no mistake; it was the dollar of 1804.

Sure of this momentous fact, he started to run home as fast as his legs could carry him. He soon got out of breath, however, and had to fall into a walk. But this he still had energy enough to enliven now and then either with a joyous kick or with an ear-piercing yell.

What could he not do with eight hundred dollars! Raise the mortgage on the farm, which was a paltry four hundred, for one thing. Then his mother would regard him as a man, and let him have coffee at breakfast! Then his grandfather would look upon him as upon one whose opinion is valuable, and ask his advice whether to keep the meadow for grass, or turn it to corn and potatoes. Corn and potatoes he decided would be best, and his grandfather said the decision was wise. Then, too, he would buy his sister Susan the cabinet organ for which she was

pining, and then she would look up to him gratefully ever after. And, well — he might perhaps get something for himself, too — a base-ball bat and a "store" ball, he concluded, would please him more than anything else. If he had these, he would certainly be elected captain of the nine! The rest he would put in the bank, so that he might be rich when he was old. Crœsus never felt so wealthy as he!

At this point in his pleasing reverie, he was met by a double carriage full of city-folk from the camp near the pond. With these people he was great friends. However, with a vague sense that to exult publicly was unworthy a man, he straightened his shining face into as completely indifferent an expression as possible. He concluded not to tell about the dollar. No! he would talk to them as equal to equal, as one millionaire may talk to another. He might even be a little haughty, and leave them impressed and wondering at his manly independence.

"Hullo, Johnny," called Mr. Dana, who was driving, "how about the cartwheels. Still turning, eh?"

Johnny tried to preserve a dignified gravity, but the attempt ended in an intelligent grin.

"Miss Day," said Mr. Dana, turning to address a pretty young lady in the back seat, "you 're a newcomer at Camp Lookout. You 're unfamiliar with our young friend Johnny's accomplishments. Johnny, turn a few cartwheels for the lady."

Johnny stole a glance at Miss Day, caught her eye, and was plunged into confusion. He grinned harder than ever, and felt that haughtiness was beyond him. But he showed not the slightest intention of turning cartwheels.

"Come," said Mr. Dana, "we 'll pass round the hat."

A temporary gleam came into Johnny's eyes, but was immediately extinguished by the thought of the eight hundred dollars in his pocket. What were pennies to him, now? Still, it might be well to consider an offer.

"Pass round the hat first!" said Johnny, with an air of business caution.

There was much laughter in the carriage over this. The pretty young lady was par-

ticularly delighted; her eyes fairly danced. John looked at her furtively. He was too happy to feel much hurt, but he wondered what she thought was so funny. There was nothing laughable about his remark that he could see. He would show her pretty soon that he was a boy not to be laughed at.

"All right," said Mr. Dana. "But if you always drive bargains like that, you 'll own the store some day."

Mr. Dana spoke that as if it were a warning. Johnny reflected that city-folks were queer, and excused him. Meanwhile, Mr. Dana took off his hat, dropped a dime into it, and passed it to the others.

"There," said he, when the other campers had all put some coin or other into it, "we 've collected the cash, but you know you can't have the money till you 've earned it!"

"Lemme see how much," said Johnny. There was new laughter at this; but Johnny was undisturbed. His turn was coming. Mr. Dana held the hat down so that Johnny might look within. This he did with great gravity, and counted the money. There were two dimes and two nickels, — thirty cents.

Thirty cents were not worth working for by a capitalist — he could n't turn cartwheels for that. No, his first plan was best.

"I hain't got no use for thirty cents," said he, with much scorn.

"What, is n't it enough!" exclaimed Mr. Dana, rather hurt by Johnny's ungraciousness. Pretty Miss Day began to look grave.

"Oh, yes, it 's enough, I guess," said Johnny. Then he added with comical pompousness, "I guess I kin afford to do 'em for nothing, seeing it 's you."

And he did. He turned four up the road in beautiful style and four more coming back. Then he stopped breathless and smiling.

Cries of "Good, good" came from the carriage, and all clapped their hands. Miss Day clapped hers particularly hard.

"Here, Johnny," cried Mr. Dana, "you 'd better take the money. It 's yours, you 've earned it."

Pretty Miss Day looked as if she thought so, too, and the others added their entreaties. He stood out some time against their solicitations; but finally yielded and pocketed the money. His friends in the carriage made it

a personal matter, and he felt that he would be impolite if he refused. By way of thanks he turned a few more cartwheels, and the carriage went on. But so long as the carriage remained in sight, he turned cartwheels back and forth across the road. He would not have admitted it, but he was "showing off" for the benefit of Miss Day, who was looking back at him and smiling.

When at length the carriage disappeared, he turned and ran hard all the way home, so full of joy that it seemed to him he would leap out of his skin. He scattered the hens in the yard in every direction, gave the back door a great slap with his hand which swung it violently open, and burst into the kitchen.

"Oh, ma!" he cried, and thrust his hands deep into his pockets.

Alas, those cartwheels! His eyes grew big, his face solemn, his jaw dropped. There was not a coin of any size in either pocket!

III

With many sobs, Johnny told his mother, grandfather, and sister Sue — they were the whole of his family, for his father was dead, — how he had found the dollar of 1804 and then lost it. Even amid his tears he found a certain solace in the breathless wonder with which Susan listened and in the undeniable interest of his mother; for nothing pleased him more than to be considered a person of importance. His grandfather, however, listened very grimly, and when the tale was told, talked to him plainly.

"What d' ye calkilate doing with that dollar, anyhow?" said the deacon; "'t wa'n't yourn."

"Findings havings," said Johnny, who thought it enough to bear a loss of eight hundred dollars without having a lecture from his stern old grandfather also.

"No, 't ain't nuther," the deacon contradicted pitilessly, "not onless what ye find was

yourn in the fust place. Somebody lost that dollar, and it belongs to him, jest as much as it ever did. Hain't ye got sense enough to see that?"

"But if he 's lost it, how can it be his?" asked Johnny.

"That don't make no difference," said the deacon. "If I lose my cow out of the north pastur, and old man Young comes acrost her in the woods, is that cow his'n?"

Johnny shook his head dolefully.

"Wall," continued the deacon, "I happen to know that that there dollar b'longs to Josselyn up to the store. It was took from his till by some scamp or other. The sheriff, he 'rested Bill Young, but could n't make no case agin him. I guess probably Bill dropped that dollar right where you found it; seems likely he did, anyhow. In the morning, — it 's too dark now, — you go out and look for 't, and if you find it, you march right off instanter and take it to Josselyn. P'raps he 'll give ye a stick o' candy for a-bringing on it to him."

Oddly enough, the suggested reward did not strike Johnny as adequate consolation.

He howled afresh. Johnny's mother, who was a wise woman, merely kissed him, and told him he 'd better eat his supper and go to bed. This advice Johnny took. He wept himself to sleep; but the next morning awoke in his usual good spirits, with complacent thoughts of the glory of being the one to return the missing dollar to its rightful owner. The stick of candy even seemed less an insult than it had done on the previous night. Now that the keenness of his disappointment had passed, he saw plainly enough that the dollar was not in any case his, for Johnny was as honest a boy as any.

He and his grandfather went over the road carefully with fine rakes. But they did not find the lost dollar.

They were not early enough. Tim Mansfield, who was a great fisherman, and therefore a very early riser, had passed that way before them, and the dollar now reposed in his pocket. He was doing battle royal with his conscience; for he, too, was to a certain extent a believer in the common boyish dogma, "findings havings," and that principle he was now using as a club to bring

his sense of dishonesty to terms. In his heart of hearts he was perfectly sure that the dollar which he had found was the dollar which Josselyn had lost; but he persuaded himself to believe that he believed, first, that since he had found it, it was his; and second, that the dollar was not Josselyn's dollar at all, but another one just like it. So it stayed in his pocket, and he went to school feeling very uneasy, was very quiet, and avoided the boys as much as possible.

But he could not help drawing near when he heard Johnny Snow in the midst of a wondering crowd telling his adventure of the day before, and of his and his grandfather's unavailing search for the dollar that morning. After listening to Johnny's highly dramatic narrative, Tim had to argue very subtly indeed to make himself believe that he believed that the dollar belonged rightfully to him.

At recess, Tim saw Si Gordon coming toward the schoolhouse. He pretended — even to himself — that he was ill, and went to the rear of the building, where he lay down behind a tree. He felt very queer, and looked very pale. When the teacher rang her bell for

the pupils to come in, he had to reappear, and did so very nervously in the full expectation that the sheriff would pounce upon him at the door, handcuff him, and lead him immediately to jail. He jumped with terror on meeting the teacher suddenly in the doorway, and grew very red when he saw his mistake. Johnny Snow sat beside him, and in the course of the afternoon held up his slate for Tim to see. On it was written "Old Gordon has been here about that dollar."

Tim worried over that message all the rest of the session. Did Johnny know he had the dollar, and was he trying to warn him? Or did he merely suspect that he had the dollar, and write the message to see if he would "start" on reading it? Or did Johnny proffer it merely as interesting information? He rejected this last explanation as too unlikely. He was inclined to think the second the most probable. Supposing it the right one, to how many of the boys had Johnny communicated his suspicion? He looked about and saw that none of the boys were paying him the least attention. The circumstance struck him as suspicious. He concluded that they were try-

ing to lull him into a false sense of security the better to observe him. The sheriff had probably cautioned them not to let him suspect anything. In the spelling class, — in which he stood at the head, — he was preoccupied with the idea that the teacher knew, too.

"Timothy — chair," said the teacher.

"Chair, c-h-a-r-e, chair," said Tim, in a daze.

"Wrong," said the teacher.

"C-h-e-a-r," said Tim.

"Wrong again," said the teacher; "go to the foot."

When school was over, Tim had but one thought, — to hide that dollar. He sneaked away by himself into the woods. There every squirrel that chattered frightened him, every twig that snapped under his foot made him jump. And he could find no place which seemed secure enough a hiding place for the dollar. Finally he shoved it as far as he could reach into a hollow log, and then ran home in a fright with an imaginary constable at his heels.

But he felt no happier now that he was rid of the coin. He felt sure that some one wan-

dering in the woods would find it. That the discoverer would know he hid it there, he had no doubt. He was not at home an hour before he found himself unwillingly retracing his steps to the woods to assure himself that the dollar was still where he left it. For a moment his heart leaped into his mouth when, on sticking his arm into the log, his fingers did not instantly close upon the hidden coin.

After supper, his mother sent him on an errand to the store. He fairly crawled toward the village. When within half a mile of it, his courage almost wholly gave out. So he made a detour across the fields, and came in behind the church. Once there, he peeked round the corner. Darkness had fallen, but a lamp with a tin reflector behind it was fastened at one side of the store door. In its light, he could see two or three men sitting on the porch. He thought he recognized one of them as Gordon. Miserable and trembling, he waited for Gordon to go away. But Gordon, if indeed it were he, sat stolidly in his chair, and would not budge.

Tim lay there behind the church, and thought and thought. What should he do?

He did not dare go home with his errand unaccomplished. He did not dare go to the store while the sheriff remained on the porch. Yet one or the other he must do, at once.

Could not he return the dollar to Mr. Josselyn? No! the storekeeper would ask where he got it, and why he did not return it at once. He would not dare to carry it to the store in his pocket; he might be taken with it on his person, and his statement that he came to return it to the owner not be believed. He was in despair.

All at once, he thought he saw a way out of his difficulties. Would n't it be enough if he put the dollar into Josselyn's house or store? He could do that, perhaps, without being seen, and no one would ever know that he had had it at all. He very hopefully planned how to do this. With the very thought of restitution, he grew happier and bolder.

Finally, he jumped up, and running back into the wood, got the dollar from the log. Then he skirted the village in a wide circle, and approached Mr. Josselyn's house, which stood next the store, from the rear. The

family, he found, was in the back part of the house. The front was unlighted. With infinite caution, he wriggled himself like an Indian through the long grass of the Josselyns' yard until he came to the front of the house. Then, behind one of the tall posts of the fence, he stood up cautiously to reconnoitre. A slight noise in the house sent him flat in the grass again, his heart beating wildly. Little by little his courage came back. Very stealthily he rose to his feet. This time he saw a light, first in one window, then in the next, as if some one with a lamp were coming to the front door. Obeying a sudden impulse, he reached up, put the dollar on the top of the post, and, as fast as he could go, fled home. He had forgotten his errand, after all. When questioned by his mother, he muttered something about playing tag, was sharply scolded, and sent to bed. There he lay awake in uneasy thought. As was natural, his imperfect restitution brought him only imperfect ease of conscience. Suppose some one else than Josselyn found that dollar?

The silver dollar lay on the top of the post all that night, trying to stare the moon out of

countenance. From the early morning mists, it gathered moisture, of which the sun promptly robbed it a little later. At the very earliest possible moment, Tim Mansfield again took his station behind the church, and waited and waited for Mr. Josselyn to find the coin. He saw the storekeeper pass the post half a dozen times. Each time his heart bounded with hope; each time he suffered intense disappointment, for Mr. Josselyn did not see the dollar. Why, indeed, should he look on fence posts for lost dollars? Is that where one usually finds them?

Unfortunately, Tim could not loiter about the whole of that Saturday to guard that troublesome coin, and see that no one but the rightful owner found it. During one of his absences, Willie Nye took it into his head that he wanted to sit upon that particular post. Consequently, he, and not Mr. Josselyn, found the dollar of 1804.

Perched astride the fence, he gazed at the coin a moment without touching it. Then he picked it up, looked it over carefully, and examined the date. As he did so, a little smile began to hover about the corners of his

mouth. With a sudden motion, he thrust the dollar into his pocket, gave a little jump, sat down with a thud upon the top of the post with his feet stuck out straight before him, threw back his head, and laughed. It was too funny! There was Mr. Josselyn turning the whole village upside down, calling in the sheriff, arresting Bill Young, — all for a coin which the whole time was lying placidly upon the top of one of his own fence posts! Probably Mr. Josselyn's five-year-old son had climbed up and put it there, and then forgot all about it. And Johnny Snow thought he had found it in the road! And the sheriff, on the strength of Johnny's report, had kicked up a mile of dust in search for it! And old Josselyn had passed it dozens of times if he had once! Oh, what a joke! And Willie drummed on the post with his heels and laughed and laughed! Just then the storekeeper came by on the way to the house. Willie instantly straightened his mouth into sobriety; but his eyes twinkled in spite of him. As Mr. Josselyn passed, he called out, —

"Found your dollar yet, Mr. Josselyn?"

"No, I hain't," said the old man testily.

To Willie the answer seemed excruciatingly funny; he nearly fell from the post, he laughed so hard. What would not the storekeeper give to know what he knew! Would not he prance round, though, if he did? But he did not, and he would not, either, not for a while yet. The joke was too, too good!

He stopped laughing presently, to consider what he should do to bring the joke to a fitting climax. He would get all the boys to come to the store that night, he guessed, when the men would all be there talking over the robbery. He would not let the boys know what was in the wind; but at the right moment he would produce the dollar, and tell where he found it. How they all would laugh at old Josselyn. Would n't it be fun, though! He guessed Josselyn would feel cheap!

Just then, he caught sight of Tim Mansfield peeking round the corner of the church.

"Hi, Tim!" he shouted; "say, come down to the store to-night. There 's going to be some fun!"

But Tim dodged out of sight like lightning the minute he heard Willie call. A second

later Willie saw him cut across a neighboring orchard, and dart out of sight behind some lilac bushes.

"Well, then," he shouted, "don't, if you don't wanter!" Then, with a vague instinct to plague Tim, if possible, he yelled: "I know something about you!"

He slipped from the post, and started down the road toward his home. Every little while, he caught glimpses of Tim peeping out at him from behind barns or bushes. Each time he saw him, he called out in a queer, singing cadence, "I know something about you, I know something about you!"

This naturally frightened Tim out of his wits. When he had watched Willie out of the village, he sneaked back and looked on top of the post. The dollar was gone. Hoping against hope, he searched in the grass about its base. He could not find the dollar. He crawled home more dead than alive. All the way, there echoed in his ear Willie's mocking, ominous cry, "I know something about you, I know something about you!" The "something" could only be that he had stolen the dollar. He watched his chance,

crept into the barn, and hid in the hay. He did not dare go into the house, even for his meals!

Meanwhile, Willie Nye reached home. Sitting down on the steps of the side porch, he began "flipping" up the dollar of 1804 and catching it. He chuckled a great deal.

As the dollar was "flipped" high in the air, his father stepped out of the house behind him, and caught it. When he saw what it was, his face grew stern.

"You bin stealin'?" he said.

"No, sir, I hain't," answered Willie, much startled.

"Then where 'd ye git it?" asked Mr. Nye.

"Found it," said Willie.

"Where?" asked his father.

"On the top of one of Josselyn's fence posts," answered Willie truthfully.

"That 's a likely story, now, ain't it?" said Mr. Nye. "That there dollar was stole out of Mr. Josselyn's till day before yistiddy. 'T ain't probable the thief would put it on a fence post!"

"I found it there, anyhow," said Willie, who was too honest to know any other way to

meet the unexpected charge than to reiterate the facts. To be thought capable of stealing hurt and astonished him, and robbed him of his self-possession.

"If I find you 've been lyin' to me," said his father, "you 'll ketch it good. I hain't got time to tend to your case now. You git out to the garding, and go to weedin' till I want ye, and don't ye let me hear ye peep. Git."

Willie "got." He began to pull weeds with melancholy vigor, his heart hot with the sense of the injustice of men in general, and of fathers in particular. But he learned that day a lesson which in his future life was very valuable to him. He treasures this saying of old Abe Mansfield's: "Practical jokes is a good deal like some guns that I knows on. You 're mighty apt to think they ain't loaded, and pint 'em at some one or other, and then the pesky things go off, and hurt him a good deal worse than ye thought they would. And when they don't hurt the other feller a mite, they 're more 'n apt to kick like all git out, and make your shoulder lame for more than a week, seems though they would."

Willie's father dropped the dollar into a capacious pocket, where it clinked against two or three others of more recent date. He intended to go to the store that evening and return the dollar. He was too busy to go now. Proceeding to the barn, he got his oil can and started to oil the wheels of an old cart in the yard. But the oil had given out, and he paused in some perplexity. He was about to summon Willie when he saw Bill Young loitering by.

"Ho, Bill!" he called, "wanter do an errand for me?"

"Let *me* go," cried Willie, from the garden.

"Did n't I tell ye not to let me hear you peep?" said his father sternly. "I guess I 'll wait till I know ye 're honest afore I let ye han'le my money."

"I guess I 'm as honest as Bill Young," said Willie bitterly.

"Wall," said Mr. Nye unrelentingly, "I guess I 'll feel safer with Bill."

Young slouched along up to him. "Here," he said, "git this ile can filled for me up to the store, will ye? Here 's a dollar, and see

that ye bring back the change. I won't have ye cutting up no didows with me, let me tell ye!"

Bill sullenly took the can and the money, and turned to go. He gave a glance at the dollar before he put it into his pocket. Then he started off at a run.

Mr. Nye regarded him thoughtfully as he went. Somehow, Bill's extreme alacrity did not strike him as quite in character. He put his hand into his pocket, and drew forth the remaining dollars.

"You run after that critter quick now!" he shouted excitedly to Willie, "and tell him to fetch back that dollar. I 've given him the dollar of 1804!"

IV

Willie vaulted the garden fence, crossed the yard, and was flying up the road before his father had the words out of his mouth.

The farmhouse of the Nyes was separated from the pond only by its yard and by the highway. Between it and the village there projected into the little lake a rocky, indented promontory called Devilsfoot Ridge. Winding about the toes of the foot in short loops between it and the water, lay the road to the village.

In spite of Willie's promptness, Bill Young had already disappeared around the first bend of the road. When Willie reached this first bend Bill had passed the second. And so the race continued; Willie did not once set eyes upon him whom he chased throughout the whole distance. But he knew that Bill was before him; the water on the one side, the high rocks on the other, would compel Young to keep to the road. He wasted no breath in shouting, but ran, ran, ran.

When he came in sight of the village, he saw Bill dashing into Josselyn's store. Astonishment at this sight nearly took away what little breath he had remaining. What did Bill intend to do? give the dollar to Josselyn? If so, it were well, but it did not seem probable.

As he came panting up to the porch, Bill emerged from the store, for a moment looked startled at seeing Willie, then rushed up to him, and thrust the oil can into his hands.

"Here," said he, "you take that home to your father. I hain't got time."

Willie took the can stupidly, overcome with surprise, and gazed dumfounded after Bill as he rapidly crossed the street, leaped a fence, and disappeared between two houses. Then, suddenly recovering his senses, he was in the store in three jumps.

"Did Bill Young pay for this ile?" he demanded, in a voice keyed high by excitement, of the astonished Mr. Josselyn.

"Why, wa'n't your father a-wanting of it?" asked the storekeeper, thinking that perhaps Young had cheated him out of the oil. "I thought it was kinder queer, your father's

a-having on it charged, seeing as he don't never"—

"Did that critter git it charged?" shrieked Willie, in his excitement.

"Why, yes, I guess he did," said Mr. Josselyn. "Hev ye gone plumb crazy, or what? What ye in such a stew for 'bout that ile? Did n't your father want none, or what?"

"That wa'n't it," said Willie, to whom the storekeeper's want of comprehension seemed wholly inexplicable. "Father, he gave Bill the dollar of 1804 to pay for it with, not noticing, and Bill, he 's run off with it."

"The dollar of 1804!" cried Mr. Josselyn, quickly coming from behind the counter, "why, that 's my dollar!"

"Of course it is!" interjected Willie.

"Where 'd he go, which way, the mean skunk! Why don't ye flax round and ketch the critter? Oh, dear me suz! Oh, what a misfortunit man I be!"

And Mr. Josselyn danced about helplessly.

Willie was disgusted. "What ye floppin' round like a hen with her head cut off for?" he exclaimed, his excitement for the moment

getting the better of his manners. "Why don't ye do something? You better believe I would n't let a feller git clean off with eight hundred dollars belonging to me!"

"But what kin I do, I should like to know? Oh, dear me suz, I never did see nobody have such luck, nohow!"

"Hullo," said Si Gordon, at that moment entering the store. "What 's all these ructions about now? Hain't lost no more eight-hundred-dollar dollars, have ye, or have ye?"

"Bill Young 's just skun out agin with that eighteen-hundred-four dollar," piped Willie.

"Is that so?" asked the sheriff of Mr. Josselyn.

"I guess 't is," quavered the storekeeper; "leastwise, that 's what this here boy 's a-sayin'. But I dunno. I dunno nothing, seems though I did n't, these days."

"You 're sure he 's got it?" asked the sheriff of Willie.

"I guess I be," said Willie, resenting the doubt. "I seen father give it to him for the ile, and chased him clean to the store after it, and then the coot had it charged."

"Josselyn," said the sheriff, "you jest hitch

up your team, and I 'll be after that feller in a jiffy."

"Hain't you got your hoss?" asked the storekeeper, in consternation.

"No, I hain't," answered Gordon. "It 's over to Wilkins's, and that 's too fur to go for it."

"Well, now, it do seem," said Mr. Josselyn, in the weak accent of despair, "as if the Sam Hill was in it, sartin. Mandy 's got the hoss, gone over to Barrington with it, to see her sister, and ain't likely to be back, not afore sundown. I ain't going to see that dollar never agin. I know it just the same as if I 'd read it in the gospil."

There was heard at this moment the sound of wheels at the porch. Gordon — and Willie Nye — leaped to the door. Sam Marvin was just dropping the reins about the dasher preparatory to leaving his old buggy to enter the store.

"What 'll ye take for your hoss and team for the afternoon?" asked the sheriff at once.

"What d' ye want it for?" asked Marvin, settling back in the seat, as if to prepare for a good long "dicker."

"Bill Young 's got that dollar again, and my team 's off, and Si's is up to Wilkins's," explained Josselyn, appearing in the door.

"How 'd he git it, I should like to know," said Mr. Marvin, apparently not realizing that any one was in the least hurry.

"Look-a-here, Sam," remonstrated the sheriff, "I hain't got time to go into all the particulars with ye; I don't want to have to drive clean to Canady. What 'll you take for the hoss, that 's what I want to know."

"Wall, I dunno," said Marvin, clasping a knee with his hands, and regarding the sheriff contemplatively. "I was kinder thinking of driving over to Barrington this afternoon. Feller over there 's owin' on me five dollars. He 's going to move this week, down Massachusetts way, I believe, think he said 't was Massachusetts way, seems though he did, at any rate. Guess if I don't git the money now, I sha'n't never git it. Guess I can't let ye have the team 'less ye make the loss good. That ain't more 'n fair now, is it? "

"Seeing there 's eight hundred dollars flying across the country in that critter Young's pocket," said Mr. Josselyn, "I don't mind

nothing in reason, but five dollars is a pretty big lot o' money, just for a hoss. Leastways, that 's the way it appears."

" 'T ain't no time to haggle," sputtered the impatient sheriff. "Is Bill Young going to be ketched or ain't he going to be ketched? or are ye going to lose eight hundred dollars to save five?"

" Wall, fix it to suit yourself," said Mr. Josselyn wearily. "I got to go to the poor-farm anyhow ye fix it, I guess."

"I give ye the five," exclaimed the sheriff. "Come Sam, hop out; I got to be gitting."

"And I guess," said Mr. Marvin, without moving, "two dollars will be about right for the hire of the team."

The sheriff, Mr. Josselyn, and Willie regarded Mr. Marvin in silent wrath. This extortion was really too much.

" Hi," shouted Willie suddenly, casting a glance up the road, "here 's Johnny Snow; he 's got his hoss! Say," he shouted, "Johnny, Johnny-y-y-y! want to let us have your hoss to catch Bill Young?"

Johnny comprehended. He drove up at a trot.

" I seen a feller that looked like Bill Young snooping along over to Bartlett's woods," he shouted as he came. " You come with me, Si, and I 'll show you."

The sheriff jumped in beside Johnny, and off they went.

" Drat the boy," said Mr. Marvin, "ain't he got no sense for business, spilin' as good a bargain as ever I see, all for some tol-de-rol foolishness of a Hoorah boys, and off with ye. I should have thought old man Snow would have taught him better. Ged up! "

Apparently, the errand to Barrington was not so pressing after all, for he drove home.

Meanwhile, Johnny had driven the sheriff some distance down the road. He was in high feather, and sat up straight and proud, ready to give his advice to the sheriff whenever that great man wished to listen. He yelled " hello " to every boy whom he saw within a mile of the road, and felt a bounding sense of happiness whenever he saw one straighten up from his work and gaze after him with open mouth. Was n't he riding with the sheriff, and chasing a criminal?

" Ye say ye saw him skulking along Bartlett's woods, did ye? " asked the sheriff.

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(OVER)

"I guess I did," said Johnny, "him or his shadder, and it wa'n't his shadder. And I 'll bet I know just where he 's a-goin', too. He 's making tracks for the Holler — that 's where he 's heading for. He don't mean to be ketched round here no more. He 's going to cut through the old wood road, and go down the hill longside of the old Hinks place, and make for the covered bridge down by Haskins's. If we drive down the old road, we 'll head him off sure. How 'd he get hold of it again?"

The sheriff told Johnny what he knew about this second theft as they drove along. They went down the hillside road into the valley wherein lay the larger village called contemptuously by the hill folk "The Holler." Here there was a railway station, and it was this haven of refuge which Johnny rightly guessed Bill Young was seeking.

They turned sharply into a less worn road, which led straight down the hill into the valley. They could see below them the river winding sluggishly through the meadows, the covered bridge, and the old, unoccupied Haskins farmhouse. Presently, they drew rein before its ruined barn.

"I reckon we can see him here if we can anywheres," said the sheriff, with a satisfied smile.

There were no woods nearer than the top of the hills. Bill, if he came that way, would have to show himself in the open pasture.

"But I guess we don't want him a-seeing us, nuther," Gordon added. "I guess we 'll just drive the hoss into the barn, and then we kin watch without being suspicioned. That there Bill Young 's kinder hawkeyed, and ain't going to come this way till he 's looked it over kinder keerful."

Presently, Johnny and he were lying hid behind a big elm. The sheriff had told Johnny to "keep his eye skinned," and that young gentleman, trembling with excitement, was conscientiously doing so. "There," he exclaimed suddenly, "ain't that him?"

"Keep your head down!" commanded the sheriff, pushing it to the ground with his hand. "Where?"

"Over to that clump of bushes, half way up the pastur. There by them cows!" said Johnny, in muffled accents, for his mouth was full of moss.

"I guess it be," said the sheriff, himself now a little excited; "you wait till he gets nearer, and then we 'll be after him like all git out."

They watched Bill make his way cautiously down the hillside, cross the road, and enter the meadow. When he was half way to the river, the sheriff suddenly sprang from his hiding place with a shout. Bill gave a startled jump, and, facing about, stood still. He was plainly puzzled which way to run, since he was between the river and Gordon.

The clever plan which he had framed when he saw the dollar of 1804 again unexpectedly in his hands had not worked so well as he expected. The prompt appearance of Willie Nye at the store was an event upon which he had not counted. He had thought that Mr. Nye would be long in discovering his mistake. He argued that Nye would certainly make no investigations until he began to get impatient for the oil. Willie's coming meant that Nye had found out his mistake almost immediately, and, if so, Willie would at once inquire at the store, and thus put Josselyn on his track. Pursuit would begin as soon as it could be or-

ganized. Preparation for the chase, however, would be long in making, and the pursuit itself — since nobody knew in which direction he had gone — likely to waste itself on false trails. So fully was he convinced of the soundness of this reasoning, that for the moment the sight of Gordon petrified him with astonishment and dismay.

In a moment, however, he recovered the use of his wits. To run either up or down the river was to be promptly headed off by the sheriff. To swim for liberty was simply to be caught on the other bank — with the dollar on his person. Bill's vagabond life made him acquainted with the whole country in its minutest detail; he quickly had his plan.

He turned and fled to an old elm-tree, — a gigantic bole which the washed-out bank of the river failed to support in its original uprightness, and which leaned far out over the stream. Its trailing branches touched the current. He climbed the inclined trunk like a cat, and was soon far out on a bending limb not two feet above the water. The oriole's nest that hung on the tip of the branch was wet in the stream.

The sheriff and Johnny came up panting.

"Come down out of that," said Si, "or it 'll be the wuss for ye!"

"It 's tol'able easy sitting where I be," said Bill coolly. "If you want to talk to me, jest come up here, if you think it 'll bear your weight."

"If you don't get down," said the sheriff, "I 'll send Johnny to get my gun out of the wagon."

"Where is it?" said Johnny. "I did n't see it."

Bill grinned. "You git your gun fust," said he; "I kin wait."

"Look ahere," sputtered the sheriff, "jest you quit your sauce, and come down. I ain't a-going to stand round here like a dog barking at a chipmunk all the afternoon, not by a jugful, I ain't."

"Ain't ye," said Bill easily.

"No, I ain't ye," said the sheriff, and forthwith began to clamber ponderously up the tree. Bill watched him closely as he scrambled up the trunk, and made his way gingerly out on the branch where he himself hung. Bill began to shake it, but this ruse

was useless. The sheriff grabbed a limb above him, and, holding himself steady, grinned at Young.

"You mean skunk," said he, "what good d' ye think that 's a-going to do ye?"

He advanced inch by inch along the limb.

When he was within two feet of Bill, that young man suddenly let go his hold, and, slipping into the water, struck out boldly for the other shore.

As he did so, a man with a hoe over his shoulder emerged from the corn in the field across the river. He had heard voices, and had come to see what was going on.

"Hi there!" shouted the sheriff, saving himself by a mighty effort from following Bill into the water. "Ketch that young sucker! ketch him! He 's a thief, and he 's got the money on him!"

The man came running up to the bank just in time to seize the dripping Bill as he stepped on to it. "He was a kinder pussy feller," said Johnny, describing the scene afterwards, "and came traipsin' up like a mud-turtle on its hind legs."

"Hurrah for the hooray!" cried the sheriff,

as he witnessed this capture, and Johnny stood on his head and wiggled his feet for very joy.

"You jest keep a-holt on him," shouted Gordon, "till I git there, will ye!"

He hastily scrambled down the tree, and crossed by the bridge to the other bank.

"I'm particular glad to see ye, Si," said the fat man, who was puffing. "This young cub is worse 'n an eel for wriggling, seems though, and harder to hold than a bull calf," he panted. "Here, catch a-holt on him, and help!"

The sheriff promptly gripped Bill by the shoulder. Young, seeing himself held fast by two strong men, now stopped struggling.

"Now, my pious young friend," said Si, "you 're ketched, ain't ye? I guess I 'll ask ye for that there dollar. Come now, ye might 's well fork it over, fust as last."

In view of the fact that each arm was held fast by the man on either side of him, Bill may be held excused for not obeying this order.

"You search that side, and I 'll search this," said the sheriff to fat Mr. Valentine.

Gordon put his hand into the pocket of Bill's trousers next him, and found nothing.

"It 's in the pocket on your side," said he to Valentine.

"No, 't ain't nuther," said he, withdrawing his hand. "I 'm mighty sorry to disappoint ye, but it just ain't."

"Are ye sartin?" asked the sheriff, not believing his ears.

"Sartin," said Mr. Valentine briefly.

"Bill," said Si solemnly, "where 'd ye put that there coin? Now be honest jest for once in your life; seems though you 'd like to, jest once, for vari'ty, or have ye forgit how? Come now, speak out. Where did ye put it?"

"I threw it into the river," said Bill sullenly.

"Wall, I 'll be switched if I don't believe ye," said the sheriff, and the two men alternately regarded Bill and each other.

V

For some moments after Johnny's innocent remark had informed Bill Young of the imaginary nature of the presence of the sheriff's gun in the wagon, he had felt a keen desire to make himself small, and had kept very quiet. He had fixed his eyes on Young with a round, all-comprehending stare, and said nothing. When he opened his mouth again, he proposed to say something clever, something redeeming. He watched events brightly, and when Gordon left for the opposite bank of the river he remained behind. When he saw by the expressive pantomime of the group across the stream that the dollar had not been found in Bill's pockets, he gave a little exultant chuckle, and clambered into the elm-tree like a monkey.

"Si," he yelled from this perch, "have ye got the dollar?"

Some inarticulate noise expressive of deep

disgust came from Gordon. Mr. Valentine, however, was more communicative.

"No," he called with his hands to his mouth.

"Well," cried Johnny, shrilly, in answer, "if you hain't got it, I guess I have!"

"What 's that ye say?" came in an incredulous yet hopeful yell from the sheriff.

"I know where that dollar is," cried Johnny again.

He saw the two men grip the reluctant Bill, and rush him to the bridge. With a swelling sense of importance, he saw them reappear on his side of the river. He took much joy of that unimpressive procession. The Roman general to whom had been accorded a triumph felt none deeper.

"Where is it?" panted the sheriff, as he came under the elm.

"It 's I know where!" said Johnny, unwilling to part with his secret a moment sooner than he had to. "You jest wait till I shin out this limb a bit."

"What in Sam Hill d'ye want to go out that branch for?" asked the sheriff, disgusted and suspicious of some ill-timed foolery.

"'Cause he 's hid it there," answered

Johnny. "Leastwise, I guess he has. I 'm going to see, anyhow."

Thereupon, not at all daunted by Bill's scowling looks or the sheriff's manifest suspicion, he crawled out upon the limb, and in spite of the dangerous way in which it bent under his weight made his way clear to the tip. The oriole's pouch-like nest again dipped in the water. When he got within reach of this nest, he stretched out his arm, and with his fingertips explored its recesses. He touched something hard, and with a cry of triumph he held up the next moment before the astonished eyes of the sheriff the dollar of 1804!

"Well, I swan," cried that worthy.

"Well," said Mr. Valentine, with deep conviction, "if that ain't the slickest trick I ever see, then the only slicker one was the finding on it out. What 's your name, anyhow, bub?"

"Snow," said Johnny, straddling the branch, and putting the dollar in his pocket.

"Any relation to old man Snow over to the Corners?" continued Mr. Valentine.

"Grandson," said Johnny laconically.

"Sho, be ye now, want to know!" exclaimed Mr. Valentine, obviously impressed. "Smart man, old Mr. Snow is. Guess it's in the family, likely."

Johnny conceived a high idea of Mr. Valentine's merits, and was seized with a desire still further to astonish so discriminating a person. He concluded to "show off" a little. He slid from the branch and hung suspended beneath. Then he began to swing backward and forward like a pendulum. When his momentum was great enough, he intended to leap high and dry upon the bank with an air as if the feat were too trifling to mention. Unfortunately, his hands slipped as he swung forward, and he went — feet and hands in air — splashing into the water. Sputtering and gasping, he struck out for the shore, which he reached in two strokes, and emerged, dripping like a Newfoundland dog, but not half so contented.

"I guess I'm kinder damp, ain't I?" said he, with a sheepish grin, while the water collected in big puddles about his feet.

"I guess you be," said the sheriff dryly. "Give me that dollar."

Johnny handed it over, and, much discouraged, followed in the wake of the sheriff, Mr. Valentine, and their prisoner. Every third step, he lifted up a foot, grabbed a leg of his trousers, and squeezed the water from it. He determined never to "show off" again. And he was right; the business of trying to look taller than you are is fatiguing and unprofitable.

At the Haskins house, Gordon tied Young's hands with the halter, and placed him in the buggy. Then he got in himself. "You 'd better git in behind," he said to Johnny. "You 're kinder damp for comp'ny."

Johnny reflected bitterly that the horse and wagon were his and not the sheriff's, and that perhaps he had the right to sit where he chose. He was too much depressed, however, to protest, and climbed meekly into the back of the wagon. Sitting there, he had to face the ironic eyes of Mr. Valentine, and found their glances highly disconcerting.

"You 'll be president some day," said that gentleman, — "that is, if ye ain't *too* smart!"

However, as the wagon climbed the hill,

and started on the road to the Corners, Johnny's clothes got drier and drier, and himself happier and happier. He began to look forward with some measure of satisfaction to the delivery of the prisoner at the store as to a time of personal triumph. The sheriff would then surely tell how he found the dollar in the oriole's nest, and praise him for it before all the people.

The news had gone forth that Si Gordon had gone on another chase after Bill Young, and the marvelous dollar of 1804. An unusually large crowd had collected upon the porch of the store. There was Deacon Snow, with white, aquiline, owl-like head, Mr. Josselyn in his linen duster, old Abe Mansfield with his two canes, with which he was hooking away the small boys in front of him, Sam Marvin, and Lucas Nye. Willie Nye and Andy Hodgkins were there too, in a great state of excitement. The news had even reached Tim Mansfield in his haymow, and now, after a long explanation with his father, who had found him in his hiding place and insisted on knowing the reason for his unusual seclusion, had ventured forth with a clean

heart, a chastened spirit, and a chastised body to see Bill Young arrested to make a Corners' holiday. Johnny Snow, standing up in the back of the wagon, and looking over the heads of Bill and the sheriff, saw them all, and rejoiced.

"Hoorah!" he shouted, and waved his straw hat.

"Shet your noise!" said the sheriff, whose ideas of his dignity were affronted by this demonstration. "This ain't no circus procession."

Very much hurt by this curtness, Johnny subsided. "Where 'd Si Gordon be," he questioned, "if I had n't been along. He would n't have no eighteen-hundred-four dollar in his pants, I guess."

The sheriff drew up slowly and with dignity — in Johnny's wagon — to the porch of the store. Johnny himself, seated in the back of the buggy, was still so much under the influence of Si's rebuke that he did not dare say a word. But he straightened himself up very straight, and tried to look very indifferent. It was rather funny, to tell the truth, this dignified air; his still damp gar-

ments, which had gathered abundant dust, his bare brown feet and legs hanging loosely like a pair of stockings from a mantel on Christmas night, and his ragged and discouraged-looking straw hat did not harmonize very well with the self-conscious importance on his grave, freckled, youthful face.

The sheriff pulled Mr. Snow's horse up short in front of the store with a very loud and important "Whoa, there," and sawed the mouth of the poor animal as if it were vicious, and only violent means could possibly bring it to a standstill. Then, carefully looking over the heads of all present, including the storekeeper, who was in the front rank of the crowd, he called out to no one in particular: —

"Where 's Josselyn?"

Then, as if for the first time noticing him, he allowed his eye to catch that of the storekeeper.

"Oh, there ye be, be ye," he said. "Well, I 've ketched him. He 's slicker 'n an eel, let me tell ye, but his squirming hain't done him no good this time. He 'd have to be a considible sight slicker 'n he is to

git out of the grip of Si Gordon twice, let me tell ye."

"Ye done well, Si, ye done well," said Mr. Josselyn; "I hain't a-doubting it. But did ye git the dollar? I guess ye did n't, seeing it belongs to me. I don't never have no luck nohow. If I was to git a mortgage on the earth to-day, it would come to an end before sun-up, seems though it would. Leastwise, that 's been my experience. I guess ye hain't got it, have ye, Si?"

Johnny pricked up his ears at this question. Now the sheriff would tell of his services. The answer was slow in coming.

"Mebbe I have," remarked Gordon, noncommittally, "and then again, mebbe I have n't. I 've got a dollar, but whether it 's your dollar or not, I dunno."

"Lemme see it, Si," begged the storekeeper anxiously. "I kin tell whether it 's the one or not."

"I dunno 's I orter," said Si doubtfully. "I kinder guess I 'd better keep it pretty close till the trial. I dunno 's I ought to show it without the order of the court. It 's evidence now, and evidence is something that

ye ought not trifle with, not for no reason. I 've heared old Judge Orcutt say so, often."

Johnny stretched ear to all this in the vain hope that something would be said about his share in the recovery of the dollar. Finally, he slipped down from the wagon, and placed himself conspicuously in the hope that a sight of him would remind the sheriff of certain forgotten portions of his story. He was standing there expectantly when old Abe Mansfield, in whose line of vision he stood, hooked the crook of a cane about his leg, and with surprising strength pulled him to one side.

In the end, Gordon yielded to the solicitations of the storekeeper and the others, and with infinite slowness drew the coin from his pocket. He did not, however, immediately hand it to any of the company. No! he tantalized them with the sight of it in his palm. He examined with the most minute particularity each and every curve and mark upon it, " hefted " it thoughtfully, and clinked it against the dasher to hear if it rang true.

When he could think of nothing else to do, he started with visible reluctance to hand it to Josselyn. Just as that worthy man's fingers

were about to close upon it, however, he drew it back swiftly.

"Ye know, Josselyn," he said, "that ye can't keep it, don't ye? You 'll have to give it back jest as quick as you 've identified it as yourn. It 's passed now into the jurisdiction of the court, and ye can't have it, not for good, until the court has awarded on it to ye."

Josselyn was a little awed, but said querulously: —

"Things have come to a pretty pass if a man ain't allowed to have his own property, seems though they was. Law 's law, and there ain't no gainsaying it, I suppose. I sha'n't prevent your taking on it again, after I 'm through with it."

Gordon, thereupon, handed the coin to him, but watched it with jealous eyes.

"It 's the one, sure as judgmint," said Josselyn. The other men gathered about and looked at it, too. Old Abe Mansfield spoke the thought of the company: —

"To think that there dollar 's wuth eight hundred common ones, and just because it 's skurce and kinder old-fashioned! It does seem onreasonable, now don't it? You 'd

better not count too much on it, Alvin, I guess. It 's most too good to be true, 'cording to my notion."

In their interest over the coin, no one had noticed the smart buggy which a "livery" horse was dejectedly drawing toward the store, nor the citified young man in "store clothes" who sat smiling within it. When, on his drawing rein in front of the porch, he cheerily saluted the storekeeper, Josselyn started guiltily, and had to restrain an impulse to slide the dollar of 1804 into his pocket. The young man was the drummer.

"Hello," said he, eying the crowd curiously, "have you found out the thief?"

"That 's him, I guess," spoke up the sheriff proudly, and pointed to Bill Young.

"Oh, that 's 'him,' is it?" said the young man, casting an inquisitive glance at the sullen Bill; "and did my dollar catch him?"

"Wall, it helped," the sheriff admitted; "at any rate, it did some, but I guess the strong hoss of the team was me!"

The young man appeared amused. Then he turned to Josselyn, and said: —

"Well, I suppose now that you 're through with it, you 'll give me back my dollar."

"Why," said Josselyn, all at once painfully conscious of the glances of the company, "you give me it, did n't ye?"

"I don't know, did I?" said the drummer carelessly. "If I did, I did n't mean to. I 've carried that dollar about a good while as a pocket piece, and value it on that account. I 'll give you another one for it. Come now, that 's square."

"I can't allow that," said the sheriff. "That there dollar 's evidence now, and can't be teched 'cepting by the court and me. It 'll have to figger at the trial, that there dollar will."

For a moment, Josselyn felt immensely relieved, and as glad now as he was sorry before, that the court had its claims upon the dollar. But the next instant his native honesty welled up within him, and he heard himself saying what at first surprised him, and then filled him with self-approval.

"Young man," he heard himself say, "when you give me that there dollar, I guess ye did n't know, did ye, the true vally on it?"

"Yes, I guess I did," said the young man

easily, " it 's worth about what other dollars are. It 's silver."

" And it ain't wuth more than other dollars, not on no account?"

The drummer smiled broadly; he apparently saw some huge joke in the situation.

"No, I guess not," said he.

"Ain't the dollar of 1804 skurce?" asked Mr. Josselyn.

" Very," said the young man.

" Ain't it vallyble?" asked the storekeeper, almost sternly.

" Very," said the drummer again.

" Ain 't this the dollar of 1804?" continued Josselyn.

" No," answered the drummer coolly.

" Then what in Sam Hill is it?" cried the storekeeper, disconcerted by the young man's calmness and air of certainty.

" It 's a pretty good counterfeit."

" Ye *don't* say!" exclaimed Mr. Josselyn, aghast. And all the others on the porch, a petrified group, looked as if, in their own phrase, they had been " knocked gallywest."

But it is to be feared that Johnny Snow, in his inconspicuous corner, grinned a little.

A TANGLED WEB

When Frank entered the room, Hal was standing on his head among the sofa cushions.

"Hal!" cried Mrs. Hasbrook, looking up from her crocheting, and alarmed equally for the lad and for the wall-paper which his feet were scraping, "get down and behave!"

The amateur acrobat promptly tumbled to the floor, and then sat up.

"You can't do that," said he to Frank.

"Huh! I can too."

"Stump you," said Hal.

"Yes!" retorted Frank, "easy enough to stump a fellow, is n't it, when you know mother would n't let me try."

"You could n't do it, anyway," repeated Hal.

"Well, I could," —

"Yes, you could!" interjected Hal, with sarcasm.

"But supposing I can't, there 's plenty of things I can do that you would n't dare to!"

"What, smarty?" asked the other teasingly; "just name 'em."

Frank cast about in his mind for some feat sufficiently startling. He had seen his cousin Will ride away on the colt a little while before. In that fact he found his cue.

"You would n't dare ride Uncle John's colt," said he.

"Neither would you," said Hal bravely.

"Yes, I would too," said Frank, irritated, "and what 's more I 've done it!"

This statement, though effective, was not true.

"When, I 'd like to know?" exclaimed his brother incredulously.

"Just now," answered Frank, enjoying the sensation he was creating, "and I tell you it was n't easy to hold him, either. You 'd just ought to have seen him prance!"

"What a whopper!" said Hal, in mock admiration.

"Frank," interposed his mother, "you 're quite sure this is n't another of your stories? You know what your father said he 'd do if he knew of your telling any more."

"It isn't a story," said Frank, with the heat of a bad conscience. "I 've just been down to Uncle John's, and rode him a mile, 'most."

"Uncle John?" asked Hal.

"No, the colt, smarty!" snapped Frank.

"Frank," said his mother, "don't talk so to your brother. Hal, stop your teasing, or I shall have to send you from the room. Now, both of you, go to studying!"

Frank, willing to end a conversation about a deed of horsemanship which threatened to become embarrassing, promptly began to "get out" his Latin. Hal, however, was less eager for study: his eyes often sought the window.

"Ma," he announced presently, and his voice sounded not so discontented as he would have liked to have it sound, "here comes Mrs. Palfrey. How 's a fellow going to study when she 's round?"

"If you 're so anxious to study," answered his mother with quiet irony, as she glanced through the window, "you can go to your own room. She won't follow you up there, I imagine."

But Hal did not seem to relish this suggestion. At any rate, when Mrs. Palfrey entered the room, he was still there, and did not seem at all disposed to leave.

"Oh, Mrs. Hasbrook," exclaimed the visitor, a bustling, stout, over-dressed woman, "I was so anxious about Frank that I thought I must run in for a minute. Is he hurt?"

"Why, no!" answered the boy's mother, surprised. "What made you think he was? Here he is now!"

"Oh, Frank," cried Mrs. Palfrey, turning to that wondering youth, "you don't know how relieved I am! Why, I expected to find you with a broken leg at the least, — the very least! But did n't it hurt you awfully?"

"You mean my tumble?" asked Frank, reverting in memory to the only accident with which he had met that day.

"Tumble!" cried the lady, "do you call that a tumble?"

"'T was n't much, — just barked my shin a little."

"Goodness, how the boy talks. To be thrown that way and call it a tumble!"

"Thrown? What do you mean? What

has Frank been doing?" asked Mrs. Hasbrook, much puzzled.

"Why, don't you know?" said Mrs. Palfrey, surprised in her turn. "I thought at first it might be his cousin Will, — they look so much alike, and I was a good way off. It was you, was n't it, Frank, I saw riding your uncle John's colt?"

"Yes 'm," he stammered, in his astonishment.

"Frank," exclaimed his mother, much alarmed, "did that horse throw you?"

"Yes 'm," replied the poor boy, startled into another lie.

"Don't you ever let me hear of your riding that horse again! Now mind, — never again! You might have been killed."

"Yes 'm — no 'm, I mean," said Frank. He hoped that a prompt acquiescence would turn the talk into pleasanter paths. His riding adventure was becoming difficult to manage.

"I wondered if you knew he was riding that horse," resumed Mrs. Palfrey, much to Frank's disgust. "Why, just think, Mrs. Hasbrook, I saw him racing down the river

road on that colt when it shied at a big load of hay, and Frank was thrown off head foremost! Why, I nearly fainted. I didn't dare look at the place for a full minute, I do believe! And when I did, do you know, that boy had completely disappeared! So I hurried right along up here, just as quick as I could, to find out about him! Frank, how did you get home so soon?"

At this sudden question Frank almost turned a somersault.

"Mother," he besought, "can't I go out now? Tucker wants me."

"No," said his mother, "Johnny Tucker can wait. Answer Mrs. Palfrey's question."

"Why," said the boy, plunging desperately into the sea of fiction, "I — I just jumped up after I was thrown, and cut across the meadow, and — and caught the colt, and — and rode home the short way. Now, can't I go?"

"Mercy!" cried Mrs. Palfrey, "were n't you frightened?"

"No 'm," said Frank. "Can't I go now, mother?"

"No," replied his mother, "I want you to

hold a skein of zephyr for me, while I wind it off."

"Oh, let Hal do it!"

"No ; I want Hal to study. What has made you so impatient all of a sudden? What do you want of Johnny Tucker?"

To this question Frank thought it wise to return no answer. He dolefully let the skein be put over his hands, and then, while his mother wound the worsted, stood restlessly in the middle of the floor, like impatience on a monument.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Palfrey continued to dilate on his adventure. Would that woman never stop, he wondered?

"Why," she rattled on, in her wordy fashion, "I know it would have killed me if I 'd been thrown like — like — describing a parabola, I think we called it in school, did n't we, Mrs. Hasbrook? And I 'm sure if I had, I never should have dared ride the horse again — never. Did you ever see anything so reckless, Mrs. Hasbrook, as boys are!"

"Never," answered Mrs. Hasbrook, with conviction. "I should have been worried to

death if I had supposed Frank was having such an adventure this afternoon. Frank, why did n't you tell me about all this?"

"I did n't think you 'd appreciate it," said Frank.

"I suppose," said his mother, turning to Mrs. Palfrey, "he was afraid of frightening me. He is usually very considerate. Do you know," she asked, changing the subject, "how they make those worsted hoods?"

As the conversation turned into safe channels, Frank's spirits revived. He said to himself that he would see his cousin, find out what had really happened, and swear him to secrecy. As this plan seemed to promise escape, he dismissed his fears entirely, and began to enjoy the prominence he had so suddenly attained.

He chuckled to think how disconcerting Mrs. Palfrey's testimony to his riding the colt must have been to Hal's incredulity. Little by little, as the ladies talked, he edged nearer and nearer to the table where Hal was pretending to study. Taking care to keep the skein straight on his hands, and his face sober, he sharply nudged his brother with his elbow.

"Do you believe I rode that horse now?" he whispered.

"Let me alone!" said Hal loudly.

"Boys!" said their mother warningly. "Frank, move away from the table."

This he did cheerfully. Hal's ill-nature had satisfied Frank of his triumph. He was content. Now all that remained was to wait until his mother had finished winding the skein. Then he would see his cousin, and all would be well. His lies seemed to him as venial as lies that are successful usually do to their tellers.

Just then the doorbell rang.

"It 's the doctor," said Mrs. Hasbrook. "He 's come to see mother, I expect. Hal, you go to the door, please."

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Hasbrook," said the doctor, as he entered. "Good afternoon, Mrs. Palfrey. Before I stepped upstairs, I thought I 'd come in and ask about that young man whose horse got away from him a little while ago" —

"Frank," said his mother, "don't jump so; you make me snarl the worsted."

"There is n't a boy here," continued the

doctor, " with a sprained wrist, or a shoulder out of joint, is there? Frank, how is that? "

" What, sir? " said Frank. With his hands stuck awkwardly through the skein of wool and with his startled face, he looked at the moment decidedly stupid.

" When you grabbed that horse's bridle, didn't you give your arm a pretty bad wrench? "

" No, sir," said Frank.

" Oh, doctor," cried Mrs. Palfrey, in delighted tones, " did you see him stop the horse? I saw him thrown! Isn't it a coincidence! And wasn't he brave? "

" What! were you thrown, Frank? "

" Yes, sir," said Frank.

" And he wasn't hurt a bit," added Mrs. Palfrey.

" Well, that was lucky," said the doctor, " very lucky. Mrs. Hasbrook, this boy of yours did about the pluckiest thing I ever saw a boy do. I was coming down the hill road about half a mile off, but I could see the whole thing, and I tell you it was pretty, the way he stopped that colt. I suppose you didn't see me, did you, Frank? "

"No, sir," said Frank, glad that the doctor gave him such an easy one.

" Too busy to be looking out for spectators, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

" How far did the horse drag you after you grabbed him?"

" Not more 'n ten feet," said Frank, desperately guessing.

" That 's odd, — I should have said fully twenty. But I was a good way off."

" Ma," said Frank, more uneasy than ever, " now you 've got this skein done, can't I go?"

" No," said his mother, " I have another to wind."

" Can't Hal hold this one?"

"Hal 's gone."

Frank darted a look behind him. Hal had disappeared. That excellent youth had seen the progress his mother was making in winding off the skein, knew there was another to follow, and had prudently stolen away. How nice it is, thought Frank, to have a brother!

" It was a plucky thing, ladies," resumed the doctor, " a mighty plucky thing. Mrs.

Hasbrook, you should be proud of him! Frank, you 'll be a man before your mother!"

Frank thought this joke in bad taste. He tried to smile, however; but, as he was far from being in a smiling mood, the attempt was a dismal failure.

"I feel," said Mrs. Hasbrook, "that he has had a providential escape. But I am very glad he acted well."

"Well!" exclaimed Mrs. Palfrey, "you don't say half enough. Why, he acted splendidly, heroically. He 's a real little hero, are n't you, Frank!"

The uneasy Frank thought the praise somewhat exaggerated. But he understood the demands of the occasion, and smiled again, — a very sickly smile.

"I agree with you, Mrs. Palfrey," heartily acquiesced the doctor, whose heart was always won by skillful horsemanship; "a boy who can manage a colt like that ought to own one, eh, Frank?"

But Frank did not appear enthusiastic. He was busy wondering if the skein would never be wound.

"Oh, doctor!" exclaimed Mrs. Hasbrook,

" don't put such a notion into his head! I should never be easy a moment if I thought he was flying over the country on a wild horse!"

" But," suggested the doctor mildly, " suppose we get him a tame one! Seriously, Mrs. Hasbrook, he has proved his ability to manage any horse he 's likely to have. Frank, what do you say to that colt of mine? I 'd sell him cheap for the sake of your having him. What do you say?"

" How generous!" exclaimed Mrs. Palfrey. Privately, Frank hoped he never should see a horse again; publicly, he said he thought that the doctor's colt would be very nice.

" But," resumed the doctor jocosely, " how about Silver? What does he think about your horsemanship, eh?"

" Silver, sir?" repeated Frank vaguely. The skein, he noted with dismay, was only half gone.

" Why, yes; could n't you manage your horse?"

" No, sir," said Frank, at a venture. Would the skein last forever?

"That 's too bad; Silver must be mad clear through. Well, well, we 'll have to fix it up with him. But it 's too bad."

Frank wondered what he had done at Silver's; but naturally, he did not dare to ask. With increasing anxiety he watched the wool flying from the skein.

"Why, doctor," said his mother, unconsciously coming to his rescue, "what did Frank do to Mr. Silver?"

Frank gave a sigh of relief; the skein was almost wound off now. He could soon go. Oh, how he hoped no question that he could not answer would come till then!

"I don't know just the way of it," said the doctor. "Frank can tell the story better than I."

At this, cold shivers went down the poor boy's back.

"Why," he stammered, "why — I — I — could n't manage the horse, and — and" —

Frank stopped, at his wits' end. There were only a dozen turns of the skein left around his hands; but what did it matter? Exposure had come.

But the doctor saw his confusion, and, mis-

interpreting it, resolved to help the embarrassed boy.

"I don't wonder," he laughed, "that you don't want to tell it. But don't be frightened. No one 's going to punish you for an accident. Of course, you could n't help the horse turning into the field" —

"No, sir, I could n't, I could n't," interrupted Frank eagerly.

" — and old Silver had no business to leave his bars down."

"No, sir," agreed Frank heartily.

"But it 's too bad about the corn. Your horse must have trampled it down in fine style before you got him into the road again!"

"Oh, no, not very badly, sir," exclaimed the culprit. He was miserable enough now. If he confessed his lie, — and how could he after he had carried it so far? — he would be punished for his falsehood. If he did not confess it, he would be punished for the damage done the corn; he knew his father too well to doubt that. Utterly unable to think, all his emotions merged themselves in a wild desire to escape, to run away somewhere. But the few scarlet threads of worsted re-

maining around his hands bound him to the spot like a chain!

"Frank," said his mother gently, "you see what trouble a boy gets into when he does things without asking his mother's permission. Your father will probably have to pay Mr. Silver a good deal for the damage done his corn."

"I could n't help it," said Frank.

"No, but you could have helped riding the horse at all."

"Yes 'm," he admitted despairingly. "I could. I wish I had."

As he spoke, the last thread of the skein slipped from his hands.

"Mother," he cried, "can't I go now?"

"Why, yes, if you want to. But come right straight back. Your father 'll be home in a few minutes."

Frank waited to hear no more, but rushed from the room. He was fully determined never to return.

A moment later, his cries of pain, mingled with the shouted words of an angry man, were heard in front of the house.

The doctor, closely followed by the ladies,

jumped to the window. A farm wagon was standing in the road, and a vigorous, white-haired old farmer stood a little way from it. While he clutched Frank by the collar with one hand, with the other he repeatedly wound his whip about the legs of the dancing and screaming boy.

"It 's Silver!" exclaimed the doctor.

"Mercy on us!" shrieked Mrs. Palfrey, "he 's murdering the poor child!"

The doctor hurried to the door. Quick as he was, however, Mrs. Hasbrook was quicker. In an instant, she was in the middle of the road, and had swept Frank into her protecting arms. With flashing eyes, she turned upon the old farmer.

"Mr. Silver," she exclaimed indignantly, "how dare you whip my boy! You 've no right to do it, — no right!"

"I ain't a-goin' to have your boy a-tromplin' daown my young corn," asserted Mr. Silver, somewhat taken aback, "nor no one else's nuther. An' I guess if you 'd whip that boy of yourn more there would n't be so much call for some one else to."

"Come, come, Mr. Silver," said the doctor,

" his trampling down your corn was wholly an accident."

" My boy," interposed Mrs. Hasbrook, " is too good a boy to do such a thing on purpose. You might have known that! You would, if you were just, have given him at least a chance to explain before you whipped him so cruelly."

" What 's the matter?" spoke up the sharp voice of Mr. Hasbrook, who had just arrived from the village.

" Oh, Will!" exclaimed his wife, with tears in her eyes, " I 'm so glad you 've come!"

" The trouble is," growled Mr. Silver, " your boy has been a-tromplin' daown my corn."

" Well, Mr. Silver, the next time my boy does anything of the kind, you come to me, and I 'll see that he 's properly punished. If any whipping 's to be done, I prefer to do it myself."

" That 's what I said," retorted Mr. Silver, " when you caught my dog in your wife's posy beds. I guess I 've got as much right to lick your boy as you had to lick my dog. Why did n't ye come to me and git me to

punish him? I believe in bein' logikil, I dew!"

"That was a very different matter," answered Mr. Hasbrook, with heat. "I caught your dog in my garden, — not three hours afterwards in the street. And I was quite sure it was your dog that did the mischief. I happen to know that Frank here has n't been near your corn to-day. It was his cousin Will whose horse ran away with him this afternoon."

"Sho!" said Mr. Silver, and in his tone were deeps on deeps of sarcasm. "Well, all I got to say is, if ye don't want your boy to be licked by mistake, ye 'd better git a collar on to him quick metre with your name engraved onter it all reg'lar. That 's the way ye found out my dog. If your boy 'd had sech a rig I guess ye would n't be a-telling on me now it war n't him!"

"Well, it was n't 'him,' as you 'll find out, if you 'll take the trouble to inquire at my brother's," said Mr. Hasbrook.

"Oh, Will," said his wife, "it *was* Frank. He 'd confessed it before Mr. Silver came. He was real honest about it!"

"What!" said Mr. Hasbrook.

"What did I tell ye?" said Mr. Silver. "I guess my eyesight ain't all gone yit, if I am old."

"There 's some mistake here," put in the doctor. "It was Frank. I saw him, and he has told us about it since" —

"Where were you when you saw him?" asked Mr. Hasbrook.

"About half a mile off, on the hill road," answered the doctor.

"And where were you, Mr. Silver?"

"At the fur end o' my pastur."

"Well, I thought so. If you 'd been nearer you 'd have seen it was his cousin Will."

"But," said Mrs. Hasbrook, "Frank says himself he did it."

"I 'm coming to that part," replied Mr. Hasbrook. "Frank, do you pretend that that horse ran away with you?"

"No, sir," said the thoroughly cowed boy.

"What did you mean by telling these people that it did, then?"

"I just told Hal for fun I 'd ridden the colt, — that 's all, sir. I did n't mean anything by it."

"And when Mrs. Palfrey and the doctor came in, you just kept it up, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir," faltered Frank.

"Oh, Frank!" sighed his mother.

"Who 'd have believed it! To tell such a fib — with all the details, too! Gracious me!" cried the shocked Mrs. Palfrey.

"I guess I won't speak to your father about that colt, Frank," said the doctor, "I don't think he'd care to buy it."

"Well, I swanny!" ejaculated Mr. Silver. "I 'm a forgivin' man, Mr. Hasbrook. Quick to anger, I 'll allow; but I don't nuss no grudges. I 'm willing to let by-gones be by-gones, an' if ye want the loan of my whip right naow, why" —

"Thank you," said Mr. Hasbrook dryly, "I believe I have one of my own. Frank," he added, turning to that despairing and remorseful youth, "you remember what I told you about telling untruths?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you may go to your room, and wait for me."

And Frank turned, and with bent head and tearful face walked toward the house, away

from the stern gaze of his father, the pitying one of his mother, past the mocking eyes of old Silver, and the grave ones of the doctor; away, finally, from the shocked glances of Mrs. Palfrey; and the punishment which he received later was less hard to bear, he has since said, than the gaze of all those eyes.

It was his last untruth.

A VICTIM OF TWINS

"Carried to the county jail
By a set of curious chances!"

Mr. and Mrs. Prescott stood on the piazza at the side of their cottage by the sea watching the twins. Standing with their backs to their parents, these young gentlemen were regarding, with the appreciative attention of connoisseurs before a masterpiece, a gigantic back-net at the end of their tennis court. Just behind the net was a small grove of scrubby pines, which in the twilight showed merely as an irregular blotch of black. Dressed alike in suits of white flannel, the twins appeared, against this blotch, in bold contrast like white silhouettes. The greatness of their content, shown in their attitude, seemed to their mildly amused parents somewhat disproportionate to their achievement.

This achievement was the back-stop itself, which was — to tell truth — rather shaky.

The twins had somewhere found an old fish-net. This they had promptly nailed to two poles. So much of the work had been easy; but the task of setting the poles upright in the ground had been long and difficult. When the uprights were finally planted, and their bases abundantly bolstered with rocks, they appeared to have an ill-concealed desire to fall into each other's arms, like long-lost brothers. A tennis ball served swiftly and accurately into the centre of the net would undoubtedly have overcome any hesitation they may be supposed to have had about doing so. But the twins, who were not models of foresight, thought their work perfect.

Mr. Prescott casually noticed that one of the boys had his hands in his pockets.

"Tell him," said he to his wife, with studied indefiniteness of pronoun, "to take his hands out."

"Is it Max or Mort?" asked the mother.

"Oh, I don't know!" said her husband, with the air of a man of whom too much is expected.

"Neither do I," returned his wife. And they both laughed a little.

"Why did you let them get those ridiculous white suits?" asked Mr. Prescott. "In that dress, it is absolutely impossible to tell them apart. I don't know now which one I scolded to-day for breaking that window!"

"They 've got on different colored neckties," said his wife.

"Well, ask them to turn round."

"Oh, boys!" called Mrs. Prescott. The twins turned with precision, and faced their parents expectantly. The one on the left wore a blue, the one on the right a red scarf. The one on the right was Mort, the one on the left was Max.

"Morton," said his mother, "take your hands from your pockets!"

Max tittered as Mort sheepishly obeyed. Then both came forward.

"Boys," continued their mother, "your father and I are going to drive over to the Blakes' this evening. Maggie is going out, too. Do you think you can go to bed — quietly — at the proper time?"

"Yes 'm," said Max.

"Of course," said Mort.

Both spoke as if hurt by an injurious and unjustified implication.

A few minutes later, as Mr. and Mrs. Prescott were driving out of the yard, they caught sight of the servant leaving the house. Laying a hand upon her husband's arm as a signal for him to stop the horse, Mrs. Prescott leaned out of the buggy and called, "Be sure and be in by ten, Maggie. Mr. Prescott and I shall not return till late."

"Yis, mum," said Maggie, as a matter of course.

At the moment, a lank pedestrian was walking lazily along the road. By a certain added self-consciousness in his gait, a close observer might have guessed that the brief dialogue was not without its interest for him. This was Styggles, a man whom an uncharitable father had without remorse christened Hodijah. His father, Hodijah said, had taken a mean advantage of his youth. He 'd hearn, he added, of men with an elephant on their hands, and he guessed they was sorter embarrassed; but he himself was the only man he knew of whose father had made him a birthday present of two. Seein' he 'd got to drive them two elephants — one of 'em Hodijah and t'other Styggles — tandem

all his life, he guessed he might be excused doing anything else, as the work was wearin'. Consequently, he was the most persistent loafer, the most completely shiftless man in the not far distant village where he lived. When he had to earn something, he did odd jobs about town ; but for the most part he loafed. On this particular evening, he was on his way to join some cronies who were going out in a boat, ostensibly to fish. Until Mr. and Mrs. Prescott had driven by him, he walked as if on his way to the bedside of a dying friend. Then he began to loiter as if it had suddenly occurred to him that his friend's name was Methuselah. And as he loitered, he thought. "That city chap," he said to himself, "was an almighty slick-lookin' feller. Guess they hain't been suff'rin' much up where he lives fur a meal of vittles. Hain't eat all they 've got, most likely. Got so much on hand prob'ly they have to feed cold roast chicken and mince pie t' th' pigs ev'ry mornin'. Would n't be surprised a mite if that was so. Why, my soul and body, it 's a sin and shame, — there ain't no sense in pamperin' pigs no sich a fashion

nohow. I guess 't would be doin' no harm if I should kinder git ahead of that feller's pigs. 'T ain't likely they 'd keer, not havin' no partic'lar pref'rence for roast chicken, as fur as I knows on. An' I guess that city feller 'd just as lives feed 'em on plain swill, just for once. It would be a gol-durned pity for them pigs to have dyspepsy, and," concluded Hodijah, in a warm glow of philanthropy, as he stuck an enterprising leg over the fence, " I ain't goin' to allow it, nuther!"

As he landed on the other side of the fence, he gave a startled " Ugh." Then he laughed. The laugh came when he discovered that the white thing he had stepped on was nothing more harmful than some piece of linen blown, probably, from the Prescotts' clothesline. " I guess there ain't nothin' white that would n't scare me all to flinders in the dark," he reflected. " They do say there ain't no sich a thing as ghosts nohow. Mebby there ain't. There ain't likely to be none in this here orchard anyhow; they ain't constituted right for eating apples, — not accordin' to what I 've hearn tell, though, per contry, green apples is n't likely to do 'em much hurt, nuther. Anyhow, I 'll resk it."

And so saying, Hodijah, the ingenuous, slunk in among the trees of the Prescott orchard, there to await the proper moment for his contemplated attack upon the Prescott pantry.

The twins, like the good boys they were, went to bed at the very proper hour of nine. Once in bed, however, they thought it no sin to enjoy a vigorous if brief pillow-fight. Of course they did so with the virtuous purpose of inducing that fatigue which disposes to prompt slumber. Unfortunately, the exercise made them not sleepy, but hungry. But they lay dutifully quiet, nevertheless, for fully half an hour. Then Max, having reached the end of his patience, rolled over in bed, and whispered tentatively in Mort's ear, —

"I 'm awfully hungry."

"So 'm I," said Mort.

"There 's some pie in the pantry," whispered Max, in a very good imitation of the voice of the tempter.

"Go get it," said Mort.

"No, you get it," said Max.

"No, you get it," whispered Mort; "I got it last time."

Max, considering the argument valid, accordingly slipped out of bed, and encouraged by the softly spoken "Good for you" of his brother, began feeling his cautious way downstairs.

In the house the darkness was Egyptian. Max, however, knowing the location of every article of furniture in it, made his way quickly and without noise or accident to the door of the kitchen. Here he began groping for the knob; but grasped instead something rough and woolly. The next instant, he received a blow upon his head, which first made him see a dozen rockets bursting in air, and then have the sickening sensation of falling down, down, down. Then he lost consciousness.

Hodijah had given the blow. Pie in hand, he had started to leave the kitchen at the moment Max had started to enter. Frightened by the sudden hand laid upon his coat, he had dropped his plunder and struck out fiercely in the dark. The blow — the result of a blind instinct of self-protection — had knocked Max senseless to the floor.

With the oppressive stillness that followed

the fall of his unseen enemy, a new terror entered the heart of Hodijah and held it still. Was he whom he had struck down in the dark, dead? He did not dare to stir. He felt himself held fast in the impalpable grip of that horror which walketh in darkness; awe wrapped him as in a garment.

Then an overpowering curiosity to look upon the face of his victim invaded him. It seemed to push aside as it advanced the poignant fear he had to gaze upon that white horror. He felt it rise in his heart and spread itself through his rigid body until it fairly trembled in his finger-tips. Dominated by this morbid desire, and wholly against his will, he began to fumble in his pockets for a match. While he himself was filled with an insane hope that no match was there, this curiosity, like the alien will of a mesmerist, forced him to persevere, to feel in one pocket after another, until at last that which it sought was found. And this will, not his, compelled him to strike the match, and turn terrified eyes toward the face upon the floor.

It was the face of a young boy, — oh, the pity of it! — and it was white and beautiful.

In the brief space during which the match flamed up, every least contour of that still face was burned into his memory like a brand. In a second more a violent rage flamed in his heart at the perverse desire which had made him burden his memory so hideously.

Wild remorse succeeded; then hope. In a mingling of hope and fear so exquisitely torturing as almost to unnerve him, he bent over the body, and began distractedly to fumble for the heart. In his nervous haste, he could not find it. Panic-stricken, he arose and fled.

He had entered the house by one of the long casement windows which opened from the sitting-room on to the piazza at the side of the house. To reach the sitting-room, he must pass through the front hall. Thither, consequently, he rushed, careless now what noise he made. With an increase of panic, he perceived that a soft light pervaded it. Casting his eyes upward, he saw a sight which froze the blood in his veins. It was the ghost of his victim!

There on the landing at the elbow of the stairway, the double of him who lay white and

still in the room beyond, stood a youthful and radiant figure. One hand rested lightly on the banister, the other held aloft a small candle, the pale light of which dwelt mysteriously in the folds of the long white robe that fell in straight lines from the youthful shoulders, gave strange glints of gold to the auburn hair that crowned the head like an aureole, and caused the dark eyes to shine with a supernatural brilliancy.

And, indeed, under the soft flame of the candle, Mort looked the angel of light which his mother thought him — sometimes. To the pitiable scamp, a prey to superstitious terror below, he was a visitor from another world, whose beauty made him the more appalling.

Hodijah, in fact, found meeting a ghost as discomposing as his fondest fancy had painted. He felt cold about the roots of his hair, his spine seemed ice, his blood a glacial stream. He had no strength in his knees. His eyes bulged out. His feet seemed fastened as with rivets to the floor, and he trembled. As a shaggy dog on coming from the water shakes himself, even so did the lank Hodijah tremble.

And the two stood there a moment gazing at each other.

Naturally, Mort was the first to recover his self-possession. For him the encounter held little that was terrifying. He was not indeed quite sure that what he saw before him was a gawky fellow who was badly scared, though in the dim light it seemed to be. Anyway, if the intruder was frightened, he reflected sagely, why should he himself be so?

And then, to make sure who it was, he put out one white foot, and, with questioning eyes, stepped down one stair.

The movement was too much for Hodijah. To see a ghost was enough for him; to hobnob with one was not his idea of a midsummer night's entertainment. The terror which a moment before held him, numbed and speechless, to the spot, now becoming more acute, galvanized him into sudden, uncontrollable action. With a gurgled yell, he sprang into the sitting-room, crashed through the window, cleared the piazza at a bound, and sped towards the grove of pines at the rear of the house.

Mort, stopping to comprehend no more than

that the enemy was in full flight, uttered a whoop of victory. "Come on, Max, come on!" he shouted, and, with the abandon of a boy who has caught a woodchuck away from its burrow, plunged after the flying Hodijah. The candle, of course, went out. He flung it away. His long nightgown bothered him, but like a racer who girds up his loins, he gathered it about him, and away! so excited he scarce knew what he was doing. Certainly, in this moment, he was a very odd figure of a ghost.

The frightened Hodijah ran wildly on. Once he looked over his shoulder. There behind him followed the white figure, and seemed to his heated imagination fairly to fly over the ground. And, indeed, Mort, who was a good runner, was close upon his heels. With the energy of despair, Hodijah redoubled his pace, and ran for his life, where he cared not, until — ugh, what clinging horror was this in which he felt himself tripped and fallen and hideously enmeshed as in some exaggerated and awful spider's web?

Mort saw the burglar crash headlong into the back net, and poles, net, man, — all come

in one confused heap to earth. Whooping like an Indian chief, he circled about the sprawling and kicking man; then he darted upon him as a spider darts upon a fly, and in three seconds more had him so thoroughly wrapped up and enveloped in the net that escape was quite impossible. Finally, to make assurance doubly sure, he sat down — a very solid ghost! — plumply on Hodijah's neck. From this novel resting-place, to an accompaniment of gasps and gurgles from beneath, he began hallooing to his brother. "Come on, Max," he called, "come on. I've got him!"

Max, on recovering consciousness, was at first decidedly dazed. He did not know where he was, or what had happened to him. He felt that the floor was hard, and that his head ached; all else was a blank. For a minute, he lay quiet. Then, feeling a little stronger, he raised himself up on his knees. In doing so, his hand came in contact with the pie which Hodijah in his fright had dropped. At this he began to remember. He had come downstairs after pie, — yes, that was it, — and had fallen, or run into

something hard. Then it occurred to him that his brother must be growing impatient, and he raised himself up, pie in hand, to go to him. As he did so, he heard Mort shouting outside the house, and, full of surprise, made his way to the piazza. There he dimly made out a white figure sitting on a heap of something dark, and heard his brother's voice calling, "Come on, Max! Help me hold this burglar."

The word " burglar " was a panacea that cured Max at once of all his pains. In his excitement, he no longer took count of so small an ill as a headache. " I 'm coming," he shouted in answer; " I 'm coming! "

" Sit on his legs and stop his kicking," said Mort breathlessly, when his brother arrived. " There, that 's it! He 's all right now, I guess. Just think, Max, we 've caught a burglar. I guess father won't laugh at us any more now. My! won't he be surprised? I wish I had that pie, just the same! "

" I 've got it," said Max, and so the boys began munching the pie, seated tranquilly on Hodijah's back, — Hodijah, who thus found himself playing to no applause the ungrateful

part of a banqueting couch at a feast of which he had expected to be sole partaker!

As the boys ate, they talked.

"I 'd like to know where you 've been all the time, Max," said Mort.

"Why, I ran into a door, or something, and it just laid me flat. I did n't hear anything till you called. Say, where 'd you find the burglar, anyhow? Was he in our room? My, if I 'd seen him!"

"'T wa'n't in the room," said Mort. "I heard you tumble, but did n't think anything of it. Then you did n't come back, and I was afraid you were eating all the pie. And I met the burglar in the hall; you bet he was scared, though!"

Hodijah, who had been lying still for a few moments, collecting his scattered senses, now spoke.

"Be you fellers both alive?" he asked doubtfully.

"Well, I rather guess we are!" said Mort.

"Wall," said Hodijah, "I 'm almighty glad on it. You kin bet your bottom dollar on that without much resk, now I tell ye." And he heaved a sigh of unutterable relief.

"What does he mean?" said Max to Mort.

"I 'm sure I don't know!" said Mort.

"How comes it that you two fellers look so consarnedly alike?" asked Hodijah, after a pause.

"We 're twins!" said Max.

"Oh, ye be, be ye!" muttered Mr. Styggles. "Say," he resumed, after a moment's thought, "ye need n't be off'rin' me none of that pie, 'cause I don't want none."

Soon the moon, which rose late that evening, flooded the grounds with pale light. Mr. and Mrs. Prescott, driving into the yard, saw the two white figures in the tennis court.

"Mercy on us!" said their mother.

"Boys," said their father sharply, "what are you two doing there in your nightgowns?"

"Sitting on a burglar!" cried Max and Mort.

THE REWARD OF HEROES

THE morning was brilliant. In the intense sunlight, the snow-covered hills were white and dazzling. To come out of a house into all this resplendent, merciless light, was to be momentarily blinded.

On one of the hills, out of sight of the village, were two boys, dressed in warm and gay-colored toboggan suits. Both wore moccasins, and snowshoes were bound upon their feet with thongs of deerskin. Behind them they dragged a toboggan.

At the top of a hillock, a rough, irregular mound near the summit of the hill, they threw themselves down to rest in the yielding snow. They had had great sport already, these two. One who has done what they had been doing will easily (and enviously) imagine how great. To feel the springing web of a snowshoe under the foot, to feel the air cold against the face, to see the freshness and beauty of a sunny winter's morning all about,

is exquisitely exhilarating. Merely to walk on snowshoes on such a day is a joy; you can go so fast, and so far, and so easily! If Mercury had been a northern god, he would have had snowshoes, not wings, at his heels.

But walking had not been the only enjoyment of these two boys; had, in fact, been only a means to an end. The toboggan was the thing. The rough and undulating hills presented a succession of splendid "slides;" and the business of this superb Saturday morning had been to climb one side of a ridge in order to slide down the other with boisterous laughter and jubilation.

To do so is indeed fun. The glare of the sunshine makes it impossible to judge the descent, whether it is smooth, whether there are drifts that will send the toboggan twisting off to one side to its riders' upsetting. The snowshoer knows these tricks of the sunshine. For him to be walking across a field that seems perfectly level, and suddenly to tumble five or six feet straight downward; to pull himself out of the soft snow; and then, on looking back, to see that he had without knowing it stepped off the top of a large

drift, is an occurrence by no means uncommon. Such traps, of course, catch the toboggan-rider as well as the walker, and give to adventurous slides down unexplored hillsides a charming and thrilling uncertainty. More often than not the boys were upset, shouting, in the snow.

If the slides are short, they are merely fertile in gay surprises and not dangerous. The toboggan does not get to going swiftly enough to make them so. On a long hill, however, where the toboggan might attain the speed of a railway train, the chances are that such a slide would end in disaster. The boys knew this, and had taken only short rides; for boys are not, after all, such reckless persons as they are supposed to be.

As was said, these two rested in the snow. Among the many handsome presents Charlie had received at Christmas, he had found a capital pair of field-glasses, — the gift of an uncle. He carried them everywhere, and used them, it may be added, to look at a great many things which he could see perfectly well without them. Naturally, then, he drew them out now, and began to examine the country in detail.

Below the boys, at the foot of the large hill, ran the railroad, — a long black line in the midst of the general whiteness. Directly in front and below them, a side-track detached itself from the main line, ran along beside a half empty woodshed and a water tank covered with icicles, and stopped abruptly where the embankment pitched down twelve feet or more. At the end of the track, an old cross-tie was bolted down over the rails by way of a buffer. Through the glasses, Charlie could see the very knots in the wood which stood piled in the shed ready to be tossed into empty tenders. The sight gave him an idea.

"Say," he cried abruptly, "there ought to be some spruce sticks down there. I bet we could find some gum."

"Naw!" — the word is boyese for the "no" dissuasive — said Dick. "Let 's slide some first. We can go down there later. The gum will keep."

"That switch," announced Charlie presently, "is set for the side-track!"

The fact indicated gross carelessness on the part of some employee; but this did not occur

to the boys in any forcible way at first. The circumstance merely set their imaginations to working.

"I 'd like to see a railway accident," said Dick.

"Yes, you 'd like a lot of people to get killed, now, would n't you!"

"I did n't say that, and you know it. Of course, I don't want any one hurt; but if an accident had got to happen, you know, now — right down there — whether we were here or not — I 'd be glad I was on this hill to see it. If one had got to happen anyhow, what harm would there be in my seeing it, I 'd like to know?"

Charlie felt that the question was unanswerable. Still, he did not think that seeing real, true railway accidents would be an altogether agreeable amusement. His fancy suggested a compromise.

"I 'll tell you what I 'd like," said he; "I 'd like to set two trains going, one one way, one the other, with nobody in them, on one track. Just pull the throttle wide open, and let 'em whiz — Cricky, there 'd be a smash! Don't you wish you was rich enough to get that done?"

"That would be fine!" assented Dick. "But" — his imagination here took a sudden leap — "what I 'd like best of all would be to save a train. Stand on the track, you know, waving something, and let the train come nearer and nearer, and not scaring you, and just stopping within an inch of you, and then you 'd faint" —

"I would n't faint," interrupted Charlie.

"Well, not faint exactly, but feel kind of tired and want to sit down. You 'd feel like sitting down, I guess, if you stood up before an engine. I tell you, it 's an awful strain!"

Charlie was unconvinced. He saw himself, in imagination, preserving a brave front, treating the affair as an every-day occurrence, and holding himself monosyllabic and stoical, like Cooper's Indians. He described the attitude to Dick. Dick recognized that Charlie's view of what was the proper conduct in the circumstances was entitled to respect; he even admitted that such a bearing had a certain charm; but on the whole he considered the attraction of a sudden picturesque weakness after almost supernatural heroism to be greater. The point was reserved for future debate.

"Well, anyhow," resumed Dick, "all the people would come out of the cars and get round and say how brave you were, and some old gentleman 'd pat you on the head" —

"He 'd better not pat me on the head! I 'm not a dog," said Charlie.

"I say," said Dick, struck by this observation, "don't it make you hoppin' to have anybody pat you on the head? Once a man" —

"Never mind that, go on about the train."

"Well, bimeby, somebody 'd start a collection, and they 'd give you a hatful of money, — ten, twenty, a hundred dollars!"

"Oh, come now!" exclaimed Charlie.

"Yes, sir, and more, too — sometimes. I read about a fellow in the papers that got as much just in the way I 'm telling you. And then your name 'd be in the paper."

Charlie contemplated this vision of glory. "Perhaps," he said, "they 'd give the school a holiday."

"'Course they would," assented Dick, "and the principal would shake hands with you and tell the scholars what you did, in the morning, the first thing after prayers. I tell you, we 'd just boss this town!"

Then a strange thing happened. Faint in the distance came the sound of a whistle. The boys jumped as if electrified.

"It 's the express!" said Charlie.

"Gee Criminy Fishhooks!" said Dick.

And the two stared at each other with scared faces, their eyes big with excitement. Both of them thought of the misplaced switch, the short side-track, the steep bank at its end.

"Are we going to save it?" said Charlie, under his breath.

"We 've just got to reverse that switch!" said Dick ; and Charlie, at the word, started down the hill at a run.

"Here, stop, you!" shouted Dick. "We 'd never get there quick enough running. It 's most a mile down the hill, and the express is n't more 'n two miles off."

"How are you going?" said Charlie.

"Slide!"

As neither of the boys knew in what condition this long hill might be, to start down it on their toboggan was a brave thing to do. Neither one of them hesitated an instant. With feverish haste they untied their snow-

shoes; then, putting them on the forward part of the toboggan, they seated themselves, Charlie in front, Dick behind. A slight push, and they were off, — their faces excited, determined, a bit pale.

They will never forget that toboggan ride. At first the motion was slow, so slow that they grew impatient. To quicken it, they used their mittened hands like oars, digging them into the snow on either side. Then the toboggan went somewhat faster, and a nipping wind began to sting their faces. On a sharp pitch in the slope of the hill, the toboggan so increased its speed that the boys gasped. The slope soon became more moderate and uniform, but the toboggan shot along, steadily faster, and faster; and for the next few moments the boys had only a confused sense of sharp cold stinging their faces, of an extreme necessity for "hanging on tight" and of the hillside, like a huge cylinder, revolving, a blur of white, beneath them.

All at once a stump reared itself before them. Charlie's heart came into his mouth; but Dick jammed his foot down hard and, the upward drift of the snow toward the stump

helping, the toboggan swerved a little to one side and the danger was escaped by a hand's breadth. Charlie breathed again, and for the next minute was conscious only of the great white cylinder revolving, always revolving.

But the next moment the toboggan was sailing through the air! Neither boy could see what had happened; but both guessed. From the top of a stone wall to which the drifted snow had made a smooth path upward, the toboggan had leaped into the air; and in the same instant in which they perceived what had happened, they asked themselves in terror what would be the result. How would the toboggan land? If it swerved ever so little to the left or to the right, if it should land on the slope of ever so small a drift, an overturn was inevitable, and they would be too late to turn the switch. To their intense relief, it landed full and square, throwing the snow to left and right, like splashing water under a flat-fallen plank, and with renewed impulse sped on.

The toboggan now went smoothly if swiftly, and the boys had a chance to throw a quick

glance down the track. The train was in sight, but they still had time; and a great exultation came into their hearts and shone in their eyes. They were now near the end of the hill, where one last obstacle awaited them.

The railway ran along an embankment, and this embankment, the hollow at its side, and the rising flank of the hill, was like a letter J, half tipped over toward the right. At the bottom of the hollow was a fence, the two topmost boards of which rose above the snow. Should the freighted toboggan strike this, — and how could it fail to do so? — there was danger to limb and perhaps to life. But the fence was in reality the least dangerous of the obstacles which the boys had met, because they knew how to meet it. At a distance of about twenty-five feet from it, Charlie shouted: "Roll!"

And the two boys rolled right and left from the toboggan into the snow. The toboggan itself, freed of its burden, jumped forward with a little bound, struck the boards, recoiled, and came to a stop.

The boys were unhurt. As soon as they

could stop themselves, they jumped up and started for the track. At every step their feet broke through the thin crust, which lay a few inches beneath the powdery snow of the last storm. When they reached the switch they were out of breath, and panting.

They still had time, if they were quick. The switch was not locked. Both together seized the bar. It was hard to move; but throwing upon it all their weight, little by little, hitch by hitch, they brought it over. The train was saved.

The boys turned to hear the startled whistle of the engine, the engineer of which had just caught sight of two boys doing some mischief, as he naturally inferred, to the switch; and to see the heavy line of passenger cars thunder by them at diminished speed, and come to a stop about a hundred feet beyond.

The engine had barely come to a standstill, when the boys saw the engineer leap from his cab, turn, and run toward them. They felt sure he was coming to thank them for saving the train. They foresaw that soon the people would stream from the cars. The moment of glory was come. Charlie, remembering his

boasts, determined not to faint, and to be properly dignified in his refusal to have his head patted.

But as the engineer came nearer, the boys began to doubt, to wonder, and to fear. This man in the blue-checked overalls, covered with grease, with a red angry face smirched with black, who came on yelling excitedly, was no bearer of thanks.

"Here, you young scoundrels!" he shouted, "what are you doing with that switch? You just wait a minute! I'll give you a lickin' that'll learn you to leave switches alone!"

The boys could not comprehend, — could hardly believe their ears. Stunned by this unexpected greeting, they saw only two things clearly: that this man was angry, and that he was coming rapidly and threateningly toward them. It is sad to chronicle, but the fact is, they turned and fled, and in this they made a mistake, for they put themselves entirely in the wrong. They ran to the toboggan and seized their snowshoes, which they began hastily to put on, preparatory to further flight.

It was fortunate for them, perhaps, that the engineer's first business was with the switch. He went straight to that, saw that it was all right, and snapped the spring padlock to. Then in his anger he turned to chase the boys. Thanks to their snowshoes, they started nimbly away over the snow, in which the engineer was heavily floundering. He had not attempted to take two steps before he saw that pursuit was useless. A big Newfoundland dog, if he should splash about in shallow water in an attempt to catch the water spiders skipping swiftly over its surface, would not be doing a more obviously foolish thing.

He stopped, therefore, and shook his fist at the boys. "You wait till I catch you!" he shouted in impotent wrath. "Don't you know, you young scamps, you, that you nearly wrecked this train, fooling with this switch? If you had n't got it round again in time we 'd all be in that ditch there."

Meanwhile, the conductor of the train, the brakemen, and many of the passengers had gathered in groups on the car platforms, or in the snow beside the train. Seeing two boys who appeared defiant, yet ready for

instant flight, and the engineer in anger apparently about something connected with the switch, these men drew the natural inference that the boys had been engaging in mischief, which had nearly had a disastrous result. Dick and Charlie could hear the anxious questions, the indignant comments. They heard men ask if "the young rascals could n't be caught," and they heard the conductor say, in disgusted wrath, that he "could n't keep an overdue express train waiting for anybody to chase two young rascals on snowshoes through six feet of snow." They realized that their snowshoes alone saved them from disgraceful punishment. Yet these vindictive men, these monsters of injustice, all owed their lives to them, Dick and Charlie, — two small boys!

Then, finally, they saw the people climb into the train, the engine give three or four heavy puffs, and start lumberingly away. Throughout the whole time, they had stood dumfounded, doubting, yet believing, in the reality of the scene. They had an instinctive feeling that to explain was useless; that the truth would not be credited. The instant

impression of the engineer, when he first saw them, had been that they were trying to repair a danger which they had themselves brought about; and this impression had sunk indelibly into the minds both of the trainmen and of the passengers. They could not believe that the switch had been left open from carelessness.

So the boys had stood there ready at the least movement toward them to run, listening with grieved, indignant hearts and sullen faces. They stood there in the same attitude, staring stupidly, until the hateful train, in whose very smoke lying black against the sky there was something ominous and threatening, had utterly disappeared.

Then, silently, without looking at each other, they grasped the toboggan cord, and, side by side, started back up the hill. Their feelings in regard to the incident were summed up in one remark by Dick: —

"Well," said he, "we saved their blamed old train, anyhow!"

THE "STORY" OF LEON

I

THE ladies who came to call on Leon's mother were always exclaiming over his remarkable likeness to a certain popular picture of a "Neapolitan Boy." At this, his mother was ever secretly pleased; but Leon himself was intensely disgusted. To him, boyishly ashamed of his beauty as he was, it was matter for wonder and indignation that he, an American boy, should by some freak of nature have been given an Italian skin.

He hated his foreign appearance more than he hated his music. He regarded his lessons in singing as at least tolerable interruptions to baseball. His instruction in playing the guitar — that he should play this instrument was a fancy of his mother's — he also looked at on the whole with a favoring eye. His big brother at college played, quite badly, on the banjo; and a banjo is not so very different from a guitar.

His mastering ambition, however, was not to walk, as he was well fitted to do, the lyric stage ; but to be a newspaper man, — oddly enough, for the same reason that his mother wished him not to be; namely, because the occupation would "take him into all sorts of places." Leon failed to understand his mother's attitude on this point.

The boy was bent on realizing this ambition. When his father and mother went away for a season, leaving him, except for the servants, alone in the house, he felt that his opportunity had come. He intended no disobedience. His parents' opposition to his adopting the romantic career of the journalist was, he argued, simply one of those mistakes of judgment to which fathers and mothers are peculiarly liable. He simply wished to correct this mistake by becoming a reporter in their absence. His ingenuous idea was that if, when they returned, he should be able to read to them from the paper that had fortunately secured his valuable services, an interview with the latest-caught burglar, with the reigning king of the baseball diamond, or with some other great man, their opposition to

his wishes would melt away like the dews of the morning, evaporating in a warm glow of approval and parental pride. He did not, indeed, word it quite so; but such, substantially, was his thought.

The very morning his parents departed the city, he sought out the editor of the "Telegram." Exactly two minutes after he had been introduced to this gentleman, he left the building. It had taken this amount of time for the editor to inform him, with a disagreeable, sarcastic smile, that the "Telegram" was " not a kindergarten school of journalism."

As he stepped into the street, he met Brown, who sympathized with him, soothed him, and invited him to luncheon.

This Brown was a reporter whom Leon admired, and whom Leon's mother, with that blindness to true nobility of character which mothers sometimes show, greatly disliked. Leon " tagged " him about whenever he had the chance, although the boy's parents often told him it was an acquaintance of which they strongly disapproved.

In person, Brown was a small young fellow, rather sallow and thin, with a quick, gray eye,

and a knowing air about him. His mustaches were so narrow and black, and their tips curved back so sharply, that they looked like two fish-hooks placed end to end.

At the moment, he could find nothing more amusing to do than to draw from Leon the history of his aspirations toward journalism. Secretly, Brown was highly diverted; outwardly, he was grave and sympathetic.

Seated at a marble-topped table in a neighboring restaurant, the two talked the matter over.

"The last way to get a place on a paper," said Brown, with decision, "is to apply for it."

Leon received this statement with some perplexity, but perfect trust. "What must you do, then?" he asked.

"Well," answered Brown, "I 'll tell you. You just hand in to the editor a good story, see? If he likes it, he 'll think you 've got the stuff in you, and he 'll hire you in a jiffy. I 'm telling you right."

"But," said Leon, dismayed, "I can't write stories!"

Brown laughed. "I forgot," he said,

" you ain 't up to the slang." And he explained that, in the language of the reporter, a " story " means any account of any event, from an announcement in three lines of a fire to a report of a political meeting in two pages. " They don't want no novelists on the ' Telegram,' " he concluded. Leon at once conceived a very poor opinion of novelists.

Then Brown grew reminiscent, and told the story of Casey. Casey had wanted a job; but he had n't applied for a place, — not he. No; he got himself up in some old clothes, associated with thieves until he thoroughly knew their ways, and then described their mode of life in many columns of the "Telegram." That was the kind of man, Brown declared, that editors were dying to secure.

Leon wondered what his mother would think of Casey. He felt sure that to this hero's brilliant exploit even she would have to pay tribute of admiration. If he, Leon, had achieved as much, she would, he was sure, have fallen on his neck and wept; and very likely she would have done so.

At this moment a hand-organ began playing outside. The sound suggested to Brown

an idea wherein he saw great possibilities. Up to this moment, he had been merely amusing himself with his companion's enthusiasm and admiration; but now his quick if devious mind, putting two or three things together, had formed a plan, and his interest in Leon suddenly became practical.

"There," he exclaimed, "there 's the very thing for you! There 's an old padrone down here on Columbus Street who lets organs to these fellows. Just hire one, go off awhile as an organ-grinder, and write up your experiences. I know it would take. It has never been done!"

"Could I do it?" asked Leon eagerly.

"Or no," — reflected Brown audibly, "an organ 's pretty heavy. I guess you could n't lug it. But here, I have it. You 're an Italian-looking kid, anyhow, — like that picture, 'The Neapolitan Boy,' ain't it?"

"I 'm no art photograph," interjected Leon, touched in a tender spot.

"And, by George!" continued Brown, not noticing the interruption, "you can twang the guitar, too, can't you? That 's the stuff. Just you put on your old clothes — older the

better — and start off. With your face, that guitar, and your voice, you 'll be a screaming success as a street songster. 'Gayly the troubadour,' as my grand aunt used to sing. Why, I 'd like to do it myself!"

Leon was fairly dazzled by this proposal. And, indeed, could heart of youth bent upon becoming a reporter, and having a free pass to the national game, withstand so alluring a proposal? Here was an undertaking that promised plenty of fun and excitement, adventures worthy of Blondel, the minstrel, and at the end, a "broadside" of his own composition in the "Telegram," retailing his deeds for the astonishment of the public. And in the same instant, he decided to sign the stirring tale simply but effectively, "Leon," and had a vision of the pride and joy of his parents, and of the haughty city editor, with regret mingled with unwilling admiration, resigning to him his chair of office.

"I 'll do it," said Leon.

"That 's the boy!" exclaimed Brown, with great admiration. "Now," he continued, looking at his watch, "I 've got to skip in a minute, but I 'll tell you what you do. Go

up to your house, change your clothes, and get that guitar. You want to get into the country. Here in the city some one might recognize you, see? Take the train to Lenen, — that 'll be far enough out. Then you 'll have Meacham, Carlton, Westwood, and Broadford all along in line, and close together. You can spend the night in Broadford. That 's your scheme, for I 'm going out there myself to-morrow, and we 'll have a chance to talk things over, see? You 'll get along. And if you ain't on the 'Telegram' inside a week, I 'm a liar. Now I 'm giving it to you straight!"

And the two, full of enthusiasm, left the restaurant.

That night, Leon was at Broadford. He was leaning against a great elm in a broad lawn that lay at one side of an old colonial house. He was singing, like any soloist of the street, and accompanying himself on the guitar. He had shown excellent judgment in his dress. He wore trousers of no particular color, a gray flannel shirt that looked appropriately worn and old, a velveteen smoking jacket, which his brother had discarded, and

which fitted him well enough, a red silk scarf which had long since been cast aside as irredeemably soiled, and which set off excellently well his dark, handsome face, and upon his head a soft felt hat. He looked foreign, poor, and picturesque.

He had arrived at Broadford without noteworthy adventure. At first the crowds, mostly of children, which his singing collected about him, the frequent pennies which were thrown into his hat, the praise of his voice and playing, and the frank comments on his appearance, had amused and excited him. But after a time, they had become monotonous; and when, late in the afternoon, he was plodding, hot and dusty, along the road to Broadford, he was feeling that the charms of the strolling minstrel's lot had been grossly overrated.

He had, indeed, met a tramp, — a rough-looking young fellow, — who had walked a little way with him, and dropped a few words that showed him but indifferently honest. But just before they arrived at Broadford, this man had slouched off across the fields, and Leon had seen him no more. There was

not much in their meeting, Leon ruefully reflected, to astonish the expectant readers of the "Telegram."

In the village he had sung awhile in the street before the hotel, where, seated with the servants, he had eaten his supper. There he had attracted the attention of Sam Maxwell, a young man in white flannel trousers and a gorgeous "blazer," who had asked him to come and sing for the ladies, who, seated on steamer chairs and on rugs, were now assembled, a gay party, on the lawn a little in front of him. They were nice people, Leon thought, all except a blonde girl in a light blue gown whom he heard remarking to a companion that he reminded her of "that picture of the Neapolitan boy, you know, — the one you see so much." Leon derived from this remark a great contempt for this young woman's intellect.

At the close of the concert, Sam gave Leon half a dollar, and at the suggestion of one of the ladies, he was also given a saucer full of ice cream. "I presume, poor fellow," he heard her say, "he does n't have ice cream very often!" Leon smiled in his sleeve over

this speech, for ices were not unknown at his father's table, but he ate the cream with very good grace, nevertheless.

All this kindness emboldened him to ask a favor. He wished in all things to act like the person he pretended to be. Consequently, though he had money enough to procure a bed at the hotel, he wished to sleep in the barn. He addressed the question to Sam Maxwell, who, thereupon, turned and spoke to a white-haired lady behind him. "Say, mother," said he, "do you object to having an infant phenomenon sleep in your barn? That 'll be all right, won't it?"

Mrs. Maxwell smiled at the jest, but paused over the request. "Why," she said, dubiously, "I — I suppose so, yes."

Leon, who understood the hesitation, forgot his rôle.

"I don't steal!" he cried, flushing indignantly; and he looked very honest, and handsome, and angry.

The lady glanced at him with kindly shrewdness.

"No," she said at length, "I don't believe you do. Sleep anywhere you like."

And fifteen minutes later, Leon was stretched out upon the hay, dreaming of the events of the afternoon and of the "story" for which another day might produce something interesting.

He dreamed, and soon his dream became not pleasant but terrible; the tramp whom he had met had him by the throat, choking him. He awoke suddenly with a cry, and found himself sitting up, confused, in the hay, staring with fright into the strange blackness of the barn. A horse moved below, and a cow chewed the cud with a grinding noise that sounded loud in the stillness. A mouse scampered across his feet.

Laughing a little at the horror of his dream, he stood up. Dim threads of light outlined the door in the loft through which the hay is tossed up from the cart. He stepped forward, and pulling open the door, looked out. A moist earthy smell greeted his nostrils, and a damp breeze cooled his cheek. It was very grateful. A dim light was suffused everywhere. He could distinguish the masses of the trees, the fences and the wall, the bushes that stood about, like so many

sentinel spectres, in the pasture on his left. In front, the house rose black and still before him.

Then against the dark mass of the house a light flashed sharp and sudden, and was gone. Leon, looking close, saw the indistinct figure of a man approaching one of the windows. The fellow stopped, and again the light appeared; but this time it poured steadily forth, illuminating a round space about the sash, upon which Leon could see that the burglar was at work.

Danger to himself Leon thought not of. He was impulsive, heedless, brave. The two thoughts he did have were characteristic of him. The first was to warn the Maxwells; the second was that to see a burglar at work would be to gain for his article material of very superfine quality indeed.

His action was as characteristic as his thought. His heart thumping with excitement, he sped silently down the stairs of the barn. Opening the great doors a crack, he slipped through them and glided like a shadow from tree to tree. Then he paused with suppressed breath and watched. He

saw the man silently remove a pane of glass, pass his hand inside, push back the catch, and then lifting the sash, leap deftly and noiselessly within.

Leon stepped at once from his hiding place, and advanced cautiously to the window. Here he listened a moment; then, taking his courage in both hands, he put a leg across the sill and stepped into the house. It was a foolhardy thing to do; but Leon was not the lad to forecast consequences. He had played hide-and-seek with boys, and why not with burglars? The chances were that they were not half so expert at the game.

The room in which Leon found himself was utterly dark. He heard no sound except the ticking of a big clock somewhere which made him nervous. He stood still, listening intently, his eyes roving about the darkness for some clue, some hint of where to go.

If only he could slip by the burglar somewhere, somehow! If only he could reach the stairway — where was it? — and rouse the sleepers!

Then the dark lantern, flashing again, sent a long stream of light into the room. Leon gasped, and his heart came into his mouth.

But in that swift and frightful moment, he had learned two things: that the thief was in the room on the right, and that there was a door on the left. To this door he crept noiselessly. It was partly open, and he passed through, sidewise, without touching it. He had gone from the kitchen to the hallway. Here another door opened into the dining-room, and there he saw the burglar examining the silver ware on the sideboard. He stood there a second, fascinated, and watched the man.

Suddenly he gave a startled cry. A hand of iron had grasped his shoulder. He heard above his head the click of a revolver and a sharp voice, ringing like struck steel with determination and anger, cry: "Drop that."

Sam, the young man with the gorgeous blazer, no more than Leon, had slept soundly.

The burglar turned sharply about. His frightened eyes saw the revolver, and he became immobile, like an instantaneous photograph of a man in action.

The people of the house appeared, hastily dressed, much excited. Lamps were lit.

The burglar, still threatened by Sam's revolver, was securely bound. Then the young man turned his attention to the boy whose shoulder he grasped.

"What!" he exclaimed, "my sweet young Neapolitan, I did n't think this of you!"

And the young man's mother, turning reproachful eyes upon Leon, exclaimed: "And you said you did not steal!" And next the burglar, from the chair where he sat bound, nodded surlily, and said: "Hello, you young dago, you nabbed, too?"

Leon turned, despair in his eyes, and looked upon the man. The thief was he with whom he had walked into town that afternoon.

And then, as if by a flash of lightning, he read the meaning of the scene: he realized what these people thought him, — the friend and accomplice of this criminal! The hot blood rushed to his cheeks, for he was high spirited and proud and honest; and he burst out instinctively, seeking to justify himself: "I came here to tell you!" he cried. "I was just going upstairs; I 'm not a thief! My name 's Leon Kestrell; I 'm a reporter!"

This grotesque claim astonished all. "What *does* he mean?" said Mrs. Maxwell. Sam started to ask, when the constable of the village, who had been summoned by telephone, appeared. He looked at the two captives shrewdly.

"Humph!" he grunted, "I saw them two come into town together this afternoon, and I thought there 'd be mischief. The youngster 's the spy of the other. I know how them fellers work it!"

II

In the basement of the town hall at Broadford were half a dozen cells. They were very small. Each had at one side a wooden bunk, without bedding of any sort; each had at the back a grated window arched at the top. Into one of these Leon was thrust by the constable, who thereupon turned the key in the lock with a smart click.

An angry boy it was that sat himself down on the edge of the bunk. They were stupid, these people, since they could believe him, Leon, a thief. They were cruel, since they had refused to believe him a reporter, since they had laughed at his explanations, stopped his mouth when he had insisted, and haled him off to jail like any despicable rogue. Doubtless they would complete their heartless and wicked work by having him tried and convicted as a burglar, all innocent though he was! What did his innocence matter to them? Nothing. Oh, for some way to con-

found them, these people who were rubbing their hands and gloating over his capture. He vowed he would be even with them yet for their cold-blooded injustice. What if he could escape? Ah!

At this thought Leon started to his feet and paced the cell. His head whirled with a hundred wild schemes. Should he wrench up a plank in the flooring and tunnel beneath the foundations to liberty? He was afraid he could not do that before morning. Should he take a bit of iron, and patiently file through one of the bars of the window? That process would also be slow, — and where was he to get a bit of iron? The unjustly imprisoned heroes of books he had read had been highly fortunate. They, he bitterly reflected, had had either a year or so in which comfortably to work at a tunnel, or else they had had confederates outside who had sent them files ingeniously hidden in chicken-pies; or the jailer had been friendly and connived at their escape. The constable of Broadford, however, had not shown himself unduly sympathetic, and very evidently truth, though stranger than fiction, was not half so accommodat-

ing. Leon felt sure he should have to go to prison.

But just at this point Leon was struck by an idea. The little town of Broadford had happily small need to be skilled in the architecture of prisons, and the cells, to say the least, were not scientifically constructed. Leon had discovered one of their weak points, — the structure, namely, of the window.

These windows were, as has been said, arched at the top, and between the brickwork and the topmost bar was a crescent-shaped space through which an evil-doer, were he small enough, could squirm. The occasional drunken man, whom the constable locked up there, was securely confined enough; but a slender, active boy could easily escape. At least so Leon thought, as, eying the window, he dreamed of liberty and of consternation for his foes.

The short summer night was almost ended. Outside it was growing light, and the tumultuous songs of wakened birds filled the air. Leon looked out of the window and saw that everything favored his plan. The ground sloped rapidly from the street, so that at the

rear the town hall was a story higher than in front. A boy crawling out of the window could not be seen by any chance passer-by in the street.

Full of elation over these facts, Leon put foot upon the sill, and then upon the top of the lower window sash. The upper one had been partly lowered, and so he was able to thrust his head and shoulders between the upper bar and the window-arch. He filled the opening more completely than he could have wished; but he shoved himself painfully forward until his toes could no longer reach anything against which to push. A discouraging doubt struck coldly to his heart. He struggled violently, but held his feet well away from the window lest there should be a crashing of broken glass. The fear became a certainty. He could not move: he was caught like a mouse in a trap, and must remain there, half in and half out, for men to mock at.

In the house nearest the town hall lived a small boy named Hiram. This youth had arisen very early that morning, and already had caught the early worm in much abundance, and put him in a tin pepper-box for

bait. He was sitting at the moment on the back steps and carefully fastening a fish-line to a birch pole, and calculating, like the forehanded youth he was, how many quarts of raspberries at six cents a quart he should have to pick when the season came, in order to buy the jointed pole which was displayed in the window at the store with a tag marked three dollars. He directly faced the town hall, and when, having finished his task, he rose to his feet, he saw the astonishing spectacle of Leon's head and shoulders sticking out of the window. Thinking they were those of a man, he was frightened; but the next moment, perceiving they were those of a lad only a few years older than himself, he began to grin appreciatively. He was a mean little boy.

When Leon caught sight of Hiram, his face, until then cast in the mould of despair, and still red with his recent efforts, lightened with hope. He beckoned to him eagerly. Hiram, however, at first only continued to grin, without showing the least inclination to draw nearer; but at last, yielding probably to a desire for a better view of a thief caught

so neatly, he walked close up under the window, and, with his hands in his pockets and his charming smile still on his freckled face, stared at Leon as boys stare at a monkey in a cage at the circus. Finally, he opened his mouth and spoke: —

"You 've got yourself in a nice scrape, hain't you?" Hiram was learned in scrapes, and knew a good one when he saw it.

Not unnaturally, Leon was irritated. "Stop your grinning," he said, in tones cautiously low and intensely wrathful. "Help a fellow out of this, can't you?"

"Would n't you like to have me, though!" returned Hiram, with a speculative air.

"I just wish I was out there!" exclaimed Leon.

"Yes, but you ain't, you know," said his tormentor with calm enjoyment.

But as Leon began to struggle mightily, a frightened look came into Hiram's eyes, and he made ready to run; for, like most mean boys, he was also a coward; but, as the prisoner's efforts to escape did not succeed, he became reassured, and the grin returned to its favorite haunts.

"Seeing you want to get out so bad," he drawled, "I guess I 'll just drop round to Baxter's — he 's the constable, you know — and get him to help you out. I guess he 'd be glad to. And I guess he 'd give me something for the chance, too!"

Then the young imp's whole expression changed. He thought of the unbought fish-pole, and his thrifty nature asserted itself. "Got any money?" he asked.

"Yes," said Leon, eagerly catching the young financier's idea, "and I 'll give you more 'n he will."

"How much?"

"A quarter," replied the prisoner.

"Huh!" said Hiram.

"A dollar," offered Leon, who in the circumstances did not wish for long negotiations.

"That all you got?" inquired Hiram scornfully.

"Three and a half 's what I 've got," replied the prisoner helplessly. If he escaped, how was he to get along without any money, he wondered.

No such thought troubled the money-making Hiram. His eyes twinkled. With three

dollars and a half he could not only buy the fish-pole, but have a half dollar left over.

"Gimme it," he said, "and I'll fix you all hunky."

"All right," replied Leon desperately, "but hurry! hurry!"

Hiram rushed off, and shortly returned with a step-ladder, which he proceeded to place against the building. He mounted it nimbly, grasped Leon by the arms, and pulled. Unfortunately, his action, instead of drawing forth the captive, pushed over the step-ladder. He fell backward, the ladder forward, and there was a tremendous crashing of broken glass. The milkman, starting on his rounds, heard the noise and ran to the spot. Hiram disappeared as if by magic. Ten minutes later, Leon was back in his cell, and the window put in such shape that escape was no longer possible.

The poor boy began to despair. The anger against the world which had kept him up, the hope of escape which had cheered him even through his interview with the exasperating Hiram, now deserted him. Prison and disgrace were before him, and he was utterly

miserable. Luckily, he was also completely exhausted, and in spite of his troubles and the hardness of the bunk, he fell into a deep sleep, which continued until half-past eight, when the key turned in the lock, and Brown, the reporter, entered.

"Hello, old man," said this brisk fellow jovially, "what are you looking so glum about? Why, you 're in the biggest sort of luck, you are! I 'd give ten dollars this minute to be in your shoes!"

"Lucky!" said Leon. He was in no mood for conversation, but this extraordinary statement fairly startled him into speech.

"Yes, lucky!" asserted the reporter, — "Lucky with a big L. Whew! arrested as a burglar and locked up! What a show that 'll make in the paper! They 'll build up a scare-head on that that 'll make your hair curl! I wish I had your chance."

Leon's head swam. Was then his arrest a thing to be taken so lightly? Was it really matter for congratulation?

"But — but," he stammered, "they believe I did it!"

"Oh, fudge!" was Brown's encouraging

rejoinder. "Who 's going to believe you 've been breaking and entering when they know who you are? And I 'll see that they do know. I know the judge and I 'll make it all right with him. Now, you just tell me the whole story, so I 'll know what to say to him. You 're all right: you 'll be in the city this afternoon."

And so Leon, somewhat encouraged, told him fully and carefully the whole story, to which Brown listened attentively, even taking copious notes — the good Samaritan! — in order not to get anything wrong.

When, however, Leon recounted his attempt to escape, the reporter shook his head gravely, and wished the effort had not been made. He averred that it looked bad, very bad. The judge, he said, would be sure to look upon it as almost a confession of guilt. Still, he told Leon to trust in him: that he had hopes of his case even yet.

Brown departed, looking very much pleased, and left Leon with a mind as perturbed as befitted one in which hope and apprehension were battling.

As the district court was in session in one

of the upper rooms, Leon had not long to wait for his examination. He was led by the constable to the court-room, and given a seat beside the burglar on a settee to the right of the judge's bench. Two or three lawyers were present, and a small crowd of villagers. From one of the benches young Sam Maxwell eyed the prisoners coldly. The constable stood over them on guard.

Then Brown entered. His quick eye sped round the cheerless, official-looking room, saw that no other reporter was present, and gleamed a moment triumphantly. He spoke to the constable, who, motioning to a door at Leon's right, said: "The judge is in there, Mr. Brown, go in." Brown winked at Leon as he passed, and the boy's heart bounded. Fifteen minutes passed slowly. Then the reporter reappeared, and this time, without a look at Leon, walked rapidly out of the court-room.

A minute later the judge entered — a dignified, gray-haired man — and mounted the platform on which stood the judge's desk. He cast a scrutinizing eye on Leon, seemed satisfied with his inspection, and turning,

called Sam Maxwell to him. The two had a conversation which to the anxious boy seemed interminable. At last, however, Sam turned away, an ill-concealed smile upon his lips, and the judge motioned to Leon to approach.

"Mr. Brown," said the judge, without preface, " seems to think that your presence at the Maxwells' last night was not with burglarious intent."

" No, sir, it was n't!" said Leon, with a return of indignation that any one should believe him dishonest.

" Um," said the judge; " then why were you there?"

Leon, in answer, told him the whole story; and his frank manner and honest face ought to have made their impression; but the judge's impassive countenance did not show what his thought was.

" Let 's see; you said your name was — ?" queried he at the end.

" Leon Kestrell," replied the boy.

" Any relation to Mr. Kestrell, the lawyer?"

"His son, sir."

"Um. You claim to be the son of Mr. Kestrell, do you?"

"Yes, sir."

"This Mr. Brown, you say, suggested your masquerading as an Italian street singer?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do your parents know Mr. Brown?"

"They know of him."

"Um. Think him a good companion for you, do they?"

"No, sir — I 'm — I 'm afraid not."

"Mother likes the idea of your being a reporter?"

"No, sir," said Leon.

"Um," said the judge. "I know Mr. Kestrell very well. I have often dined at his house. I remember seeing his son once or twice. You do not seem to me at all to resemble him."

Leon stood aghast.

"However," continued the judge, "we will assume you are his son. Excellent men before now have had sons who were a disgrace to them. I 'm afraid your being his son won't help you. What Mr. Brown says, of

course, shows that you really started out as a reporter, — an amateur reporter, that is, without credentials from any paper."

Leon trembled.

"But, equally of course, Brown knows nothing of your doings at the Maxwells'. You may have planned burglary all the time, for all he can say to the contrary. I 'm afraid what he can tell won't help you much, either. On the other hand, you were caught in company with an undoubted thief. You came into town with him in the afternoon. Later, you tried to break jail. Against all this — which is enough to convict a man before any jury — I have only your simple word. How am I to know how much that 's worth?"

Leon made no answer; and the judge, after a pause, proceeded.

"I 'm sorry, for you look like an honest boy. But I don't see that I can do anything except commit you to jail to await the action of the grand jury, do you? It will forever sadden the heart of your father, who is my friend, I am afraid it will break the heart of your poor mother, to know that their son is

accused and probably guilty of a state prison offense. But what am I to do? If I did as I should like to do, I should let you go. But my duty is first. Do you see anything for me to do except commit you to jail?"

Leon listened to this long speech in great misery. There was no hope for him, — he realized it. He must pay the penalty of his folly. He saw himself tried, convicted, in prison; he saw the sad, stern face of his father, the weeping, anguished eyes of his mother. What would he not give never to have undertaken this stupid adventure which had brought him to the threshold of prison, would in a little while surely carry him across it!

The judge waited patiently for the answer, but it did not come.

"Look up here," he said, at length, sharply; "answer my question."

Something in the tone of the judge's voice struck Leon, — something encouraging and of good omen. He looked up, and caught a twinkle in the judge's eye.

"I see," said that gentleman, "you have n't that knowledge of the law which a lawyer's son — and a reporter — ought to have. There

is really a very simple way out of the trouble. I have had a little talk with Mr. Maxwell here, the party aggrieved, and the principal witness against you. He has decided you are innocent, and withdraws his charges. You can go."

As Leon, dizzy with joy, shamefacedly conscious of the smiles of the judge and the quizzical glances of Sam, left the court-room, he caught the eye of the burglar. The man's face expressed such comical stupefaction at the boy's sudden and to him inexplicable liberation that Leon burst into a nervous laugh. But a stream of pity followed and extinguished his merriment, for this man was guilty, and must suffer all that he had thought to suffer so little time before.

It is curious how circumstances alter cases, — and boys. Five minutes before, Leon had been ready to abjure journalism and all its works; but with the return of liberty the fascination came back upon him as strong as ever. The words of Brown, "Here's something like a story!" recurred to his memory, and, tired as he was, he would have sat down in the hotel office and written an account of his

adventure, had not the worthy landlord — first, however, getting every detail of his arrest and trial from the lad like the retailer of gossip that he was — packed him off to bed. He had two hours of refreshing sleep before the dinner at half-past twelve, for which he insisted upon being awakened; and, in the afternoon, in a big boyish hand and in the most high-sounding phrases, he wrote the history of his masquerade. At five o'clock, light-hearted and triumphant, he was again in the office of the city editor of the "Telegram." The fact that his manuscript, written not at all in the right reportorial fashion, was in such shape that no editor would print it, did not trouble him at all, since he did not know it.

"Here 's a story for you," he said, trying hard to keep the note of exultation from his voice. His eyes shone with happy confidence. He was so sure of the success of his "story"!

The editor glanced through a few pages. Then looking up from his chair with a curious smile, he said: —

"So you 're the boy who did all this, are you?"

"Yes," said Leon modestly.

"Have you seen the afternoon paper?" asked the editor.

"No," said the happy boy, wondering at the queer question.

The editor caught up a copy from his desk, and pointing out a column, said simply: "Read that."

First, Leon saw his own name in the big capitals of the caption as that of the "Boy who Wanted to be a Reporter," who had "Employed a Unique Method" to accomplish his purpose, and who had been "Locked up in Broadford as a Burglar." He read down the column with blurring eyes. He saw his name in full, his address, the name of his father, with a mention of his high standing in the community. He read through a long detailed account, offensively facetious in tone, of his deeds of the past twenty-four hours. He read in the closing paragraph the description of his personal appearance, wherein it was said that "it was a common remark among the friends of this remarkably handsome young gentleman how much he resembled the famous picture called 'The Neapolitan Boy.'" This was the last straw.

"Who — who was mean enough — Brown?" he stammered brokenly.

"Yes. Mr. Brown brought that in about noon to-day. It 's a very good story," said the editor coolly. Then, seeing Leon's bitter disappointment, he added, not unkindly: "Never mind, my boy, if Brown did play you a mean trick. He 'll never be any better off for it, you mark my words. But let me give you a bit of advice: Don't again try to wear a man's hat until your head 's got its full growth. When it has, you 'll be at the head of a paper yourself, if you want to be, for you 're enterprising, and you 're plucky."

The city editor's prediction has been fulfilled. Brown, however, is still a reporter. And the boy, Hiram, — well, if the truth must be told, he is a rich man, but is much disliked by his neighbors, and has not much joy of his money.

PRINCE JOE

THE spot where Joe found himself was very pleasant. It was the edge of a wood crowning a gentle slope; but, slight as was the rise in the ground, it enabled him to look over the stretch of pasture and cultivated field and "wood-lot" to the sparkle of Lake Champlain beyond. The foliage and grass had all the shades of tender green that befit them during June in New England. The day was warm, and there was no noise that Joe — too busy anyway to notice sounds and scenes except subconsciously — could hear except that made by a lad chopping wood in the yard of a farmhouse not far away.

Joe was whistling, half under his breath, in a contented fashion; and as he moved slowly along the edge of the wood, was closely scrutinizing the trees. A sudden change in his manner showed that his sharp eyes had spied something interesting. He stopped whistling, stepped quickly back a step or two, and

dodged from side to side, until he got the object which had attracted his notice clearly in view. Then he uttered with emphatic satisfaction the single word "flicker!"

That it was not a flicker at all should be hastily added; for the flicker is not a bird which stops to be stared at.

Joe stood before a tall tree-trunk, which was evidently quite dead, and near the top of which was a round hole about twice the size of a silver dollar. This hole Joe looked at sharply to determine whether the nest were old or new. The hole had not that perfectly round and neatly cut appearance which the entrance to a new nest should have; and he looked in vain for the stray, downy feathers which, brushed off from the bird's breast in its goings and comings, and caught by the rough bark, are a sure sign that a nest is in use. Still, in such matters, Joe had known all signs to fail.

A tree in full vigor of life and foliage, which stood beside the dead trunk and partially concealed it, had made Joe's dodging necessary in order to see the hole which this instructed youth had immediately set

down as the work of a flicker, or golden-winged woodpecker. But if the tree had made the finding of the nest difficult, it made approach easy, as Joe's eye was prompt to discover. The big dead tree-trunk, without a branch from one end to the other of its twenty feet, would have been too much for the skill in climbing even of one whose ability in getting to all sorts of seemingly inaccessible places had won from his companions the wholly complimentary name of "monkey Joe." But this tree had branches near the ground, and Joe's gray flannel shirt and rough worn trousers were shortly to be seen at intervals through its foliage, and each time nearer the top.

Panting a little, and with his face flushed with the exertion of the ascent which, with his usual energy, he had made rather more quickly than was necessary, Joe was soon astride a limb, whence he could look directly down upon the dead bole, which was just below him, and which his pendent feet almost touched.

"Older 'n Methuselah!" was his disgusted verdict on the nest.

The dead trunk revealed itself from Joe's new point of view as hollow, and the woodpecker's nest was like those ruins which consist of doorways with no buildings behind them. Joe ruefully surveyed the cavity. It extended down the trunk of the tree apparently about six feet, — a most attractive lurking place for a jack-in-the-box of about Joe's inches. The next moment saw him swing impulsively from the limb on which he was seated, hang a moment in the hollow tree, and then drop down into the alluring cavity.

He dropped twenty feet. The floor which had looked so solid was nothing but a litter of wind-blown twigs and dead leaves. Joe did not drop like a shot. The hole in its upper portion was just large enough to admit his body, and all the startled boy felt as he scraped through the narrow passage was a rough tearing of clothes, a general departure of buttons, a scratching of knees and face, and a deal of dust in his eyes and mouth. Then, suddenly, the hollow widened so that he fell unimpeded, and landed finally, much shaken, very confused, but quite unhurt, on a soft, moist heap of particles of rotten wood.

He was caught in this hollow tree as completely as a beetle thrust by a boy into a bottle.

About this time — it was perhaps ten o'clock in the morning — a little girl came out from the neighboring farmhouse. She was dressed in a very short-waisted white gown — or possibly it was a white apron over the gown — with big puffs at the shoulders. Her golden hair fell all about her face, and she wore a big hat, Gainsborough fashion. She carried a book under one arm, and a doll under the other, and she was very pretty. She came into the yard, and for a while watched with a critical eye the boy Reuben as he chopped the wood. She thought him wonderfully strong, — strong as that man Hercules — she pronounced it in two syllables — about whom she had read in Bulfinch's "Age of Fable." Then she passed up the slope toward the great dead tree, where there was a pleasant shade and a lovely view.

The book she had was a collection of stories about fairies. In the existence of these beings, although she had never seen any of them, she quite believed. She wondered if there

were not some in the wood, it seemed so fit a place for them. She would not be surprised, she thought, to meet one or a dozen there any day; and as she came up silently to the old tree, and sat down on the dry grass, she looked about inquiringly.

Then, settling the doll against a stone, she drew its dress into the proper fold with two expert dabs of her hand, opened her book, and began to read. She turned by chance to a story of a princess who was wandering in a wood, and came upon a beautiful evergreen tree. The princess greatly desired some of the branches of this tree to wreathe above the arches of the great stone hall where the king, her father, and his nobles dined every day. So she reached forth her hand and plucked a branch, and behold, it bled; and a voice issued from the tree, lamenting, for this graceful evergreen was no less than a Prince of the North whom a wicked enchantress had changed into a tree, because she hated him for his handsome face and his good heart.

Marian was breathlessly interested, and began quite unconsciously to read aloud. In doing so, she gave Joe the first hint he had

received of a human presence near him. In his dark, close tree-trunk he gave a start of joy and shouted: "Hello you, out there!"

He was going on to demand aid, but he heard the person outside jump up with a startled cry; and he interrupted himself to exclaim, and explain anxiously: —

"Oh, don't run away — hold on a minute, can't you! Don't be scared — it's only me!"

This disconnected appeal had an extraordinary effect upon the visitor to the tree. Joe's fear lest he be deserted passed quickly into perplexity, and his perplexity into exasperation, and no wonder. He saw himself no particular cause for hilarious joy in his situation, yet he heard without the sound of dancing feet, the clapping of hands, and a treble voice crying, "Oh, goody, goody!" as if its owner had found a Christmas tree in the woods. For Marian, though startled at first, had swiftly argued that, inasmuch as a talking tree could only mean an enchanted prince, she was in the midst of an adventure like that of the princess in the book, and was overjoyed.

But Joe was angry "clear through" at this idiotic joy.

"It isn't 'goody' at all!" he said with heat, "and I guess you wouldn't think so, either, if you was me. Anybody 'd think, to hear you shout, that this was a Fourth of July parade. But it isn't, just the same."

As Marian gave no attention to this protest, he raised his voice to an exasperated shout.

"Quit your 'goody'-in', can't you? Go get an axe, or a rope or something. Stop your monkeying, and hurry up, too!"

Marian paid no heed to the ungracious tone of the prince: she was puzzled to think how a fairy being could know anything about the Fourth of July, and she was completely swallowed up in wonder at the queer demand for a rope or an axe. No prince converted into bark and wood had ever in the whole course of her reading asked for a rope or an axe. No, indeed! Somebody said something mysterious, and the tree straightway split apart as neatly and nicely as a glove-box opens, and the prince stepped forth smiling as if from a cedar chest, where he had been put, as other

dainty things are, to be kept from the moths.

"An axe or a rope!" she repeated, dazed; "what do you want with a rope or an axe?"

"What do I want with them?" cried Joe, to whom the girl's stupidity seemed inexcusable, and who was growing more and more impatient for release, — "what do I want them for? Why, to get out of this tree with, of course. Do you think I wanted them to play with?"

"Oh, no," said Marian, busy with her own thoughts; "but what do you know of the Fourth of July?"

"I ain't got time," said Joe, with angry sarcasm, "to recite United States history. Will you get a rope or an axe?"

"But I don't see" — began Marian.

"Well," groaned Joe, "of all the stupid — Say, you 're a girl, aren 't you?"

"Of course," said Marian, surprised.

"Well," said Joe scornfully, "I thought so. No boy 'd be such a fool. But you can do as you 're told, can't you?"

Marian stared. She had been dimly conscious that the manners of the prince were

odd; now she suddenly realized how utterly bad they were. Hurt and grieved, she sought vainly for an explanation, until at last a bright thought came to her. This was a naughty prince, confined in the tree in order to cure him of bad manners; and plainly — the thought gave Marian pause — he had n't been shut up quite long enough. It flashed through her mind that good fairies in the books frequently punished bad boys so — " just like your mother shutting you up in a dark closet." If such was the case with this particular prince, ought she, Marian asked herself, to help him to get out?

" I sha'n't let you out," said Marian, with decision, " until you get more politer. Come, Arabella!" and picking up the doll, she turned and walked away — a Kate Greenaway picture of Justice.

Joe heard her go with mixed astonishment, rage, and despair. It became evident to him now, as it had not been evident before, that this girl, so fantastic, and queer, and unreasonable, was mistress of the situation; and he knew, as he did it, that he raged and kicked the tree to no purpose.

He grew calm at last, and stuffing his fists into his pockets, sat down dejectedly in the rotten wood. It was very still — oppressively so — and close. He could hear eerie little insect noises like that of the deathwatch which, if the house is old, you hear sometimes in the night. He listened to them dully a long time. Then a squirrel came scratching his way down the hollow, perceived Joe, filled the resonant passage a minute with angry chattering, and fled. Another interval followed, and a woodpecker came to the tree, kept up a rat-a-tat for a while on its sides, and flew away: Joe wished it had stayed. Then a new sound struck his ear, — the sound of some animal cropping grass close by his prison. He knew not what impulse of desperate mirth made him give a sudden yell. There was a loud and terrified snort, the sound of four feet landing all together on the turf, as if after a sudden jump, a pause of perfect stillness, another snort, and then the dull pounding of galloping hoofs. All this brought so swift, and clear, and ludicrous a vision of a terrified pony to Joe's mind that, even in his despair, he broke into a short, convulsed laugh.

This was the only gleam of merriment that visited him that memorable day. And even this brief mirth was quickly extinguished by the discovery that the ants, of which the tree was full, were crawling about his clothing, on his hands, even on his face. He jumped up, and began slapping himself vigorously, and he drew a pair of very dirty hands over his face, to the destruction, as he perceived with grim joy, of several of the uncomfortable little pests. Not liking to sit down again, he remained on his feet, hot and miserable there in the darkness. Time passed. He thought of the boys playing ball on the common, of the swim in the lake they would have after the game, of the good dinners they would eat, — of a hundred pleasant things of which he could take his part, if he were only out in the sunshine. And to think that he might now be there, if he had only been polite to that fool of a girl!

Marian went her way fully convinced that the prince ought to stay where he was a very long time, "perhaps hundreds and hundreds of years," for did she not know that the lives

of folk under enchantment were capable of indefinite extension? She determined to think no more about him; but the resolution was hard to hold. Do what she would, her thought continually came back to the poor prince. She found herself wondering what he was doing or thinking. Marian was not cruel. She could not have kept even an impertinent boy shut up so, if by any act of hers she could set him free; but an enchanted prince was an entirely different matter. Still, her sympathy went out to him, and she wondered all sorts of things about his queer life. At dinner, for example, she asked herself what people turned into trees ate. She supposed they must live upon sap; "and if you were turned into a sugar maple tree," she concluded, "that would be rather nice." But this living prince was turned into a dead tree, she recollected. And then she gave it up.

At first, as was said, she had made up her mind not to help the prince out for a very long time. Little by little, however, the time shortened, — she would let him out in a month, next Saturday, to-morrow. Certainly she

did want very much to see what a real prince would look like. Then a glance at Reuben, still at the woodpile, filled her with a thought of horror. Supposing some inconsiderate person should chop up the prince into kindling wood? She was decided: she would let him out to-day.

The fact was that Joe, tired out with long hours of waiting and weariness, hunger and hopelessness, had at last fallen asleep. So he did not hear Marian's soft footsteps as she approached the tree. When she had left him before, he was sorry he had not been more courteous, mainly, however, because his rudeness had resulted disastrously to himself. But some hours of quiet thinking, such as he had had ample opportunity for, had led him to determine that he never in any circumstances would be impolite again. This resolution, however, suffered a rude defeat when he was suddenly awakened by some one knocking on the tree, and a girlish voice inquiring, "Mr. Prince, Mr. Prince, are you in?" It was Marian, who, after mature thought, had decided that to rap when calling on a prince was only proper.

"In?" exclaimed Joe, with all his old petulance,— "in? Of course I 'm in. I can't get out, can I?"

But he bethought himself immediately, and continued gently enough: —

"Please go get some one with an axe, and get me out of this. I'm awfully hungry."

"What!" said Marian, her thought suddenly reverting to the theory of the sap, "have n't you had anything to eat?"

To answer calmly so absurd a question cost Joe a mighty effort.

"No," he said quietly, "not since breakfast. Please hurry and get the axe, won't you, please?"

There is no knowing what would have happened, if Marian had thought to ask, as from her point of view she might have done with perfect reasonableness, why, if he had had breakfast, he had n't had dinner also; but fortunately she was struck by something else in his speech and tones.

"You 're more polite than you were," she said contemplatively. "I think perhaps I might help you, now you're good."

"Oh, do! do!" cried Joe; "run and get an axe!"

"I don't see yet what you want with an axe," said Marian, "but I 'll go get Reuben. He 's got one." And she started toward the house.

Joe soon heard voices, the girl's, and — oh, joy! — a boy's voice, too. There was, he reflected, some sense coming now. It was, in fact, Reuben, whom Marian had found just starting for the cows, — it was now near sunset, — and quite willing to make a detour to the dead tree to see what the little girl's incoherent talk about an enchanted prince really meant. Reuben knew that the tree was hollow; but he could not imagine how any one could have tumbled into it.

"Have you got an axe?" shouted Joe excitedly, addressing himself to Reuben.

"Ye-us," said Reuben cheerfully; "but how under the canopy 'd you git into that tree, anyhow?"

"Oh, please," cried Joe, who since his lesson said "please" every third word, "never mind about that now! Just cut me out, won't you, please?"

"Sa-ay," asked Reuben, "haow much room hev ye got in there, when ye git close t' th' other side?"

"Oh, plenty, — most a foot," returned Joe. "You need n't be afraid of hitting me. I 'm all right."

So Reuben raised his axe for a mighty blow, but paused at a horrified cry from Marian. This experienced little woman knew — positively — that when human beings were converted into trees, it hurt them to be cut and slashed with axes quite as much as if they had not altered their shapes; and she was in real fright at the prospect.

"Oh, don't! oh, don't! you 'll hurt him. I know you 'll hurt him!" she cried, and fairly danced up and down in terror, wringing her hands. Reuben stared, axe suspended.

"Jest you tend right to your knittin', and don't you worry," he said finally. "I guess I know what I 'm a-doin'."

The axe fell. Marian covered her eyes; but as there came no scream of agony from the tree, she ventured to peep between her fingers, and then, as no blood gushed from the wounded side, she stopped fearing and began wondering, as she watched the singularly dry chips fly under Reuben's blows, at the disregard of all the rules in the books

shown by this enchanted tree. She concluded at length that this tree was "different."

Joe listened to the blows of the axe with beating heart: life and liberty were coming nearer to him with every stroke. Soon he would be free to stretch his cramped limbs in the sunshine, and to get a breath of the blessed fresh air. In a little while he saw light appear through a small hole, which grew steadily larger until he could put first a fist, then an arm, a leg, his whole body through.

"Oh, thank you, thank you!" he shouted. "That's enough. I can get out of that! Oh, if you aren't a brick!" and as Reuben stood aside he stepped forth gladly.

Marian, too, watched with bated breath the hole in the tree grow larger. From this, she thought, in due time, the prince would appear. He would be brilliant and beautiful, with a silken doublet and cloak, with white satin shoes, on which would be silver buckles; he would have rosettes at his knees; on his head he would wear a velvet cap with a plume nodding proudly above it, and there would be lace about his hands, one of which would rest

on his sword hilt negligently as he drew his heels together, swept his hat to his knee, and bowed.

But what, alas! was the reality? Joe, happy in his freedom, and finely unconscious of his torn clothes which were covered with bits of rotten wood, and of his dirty face which was dotted here and there with a dead ant, stepped from the tree, and, blinded by the sudden light, stood blinking like a particularly ugly and disreputable owl. And right before him he saw a daintily dressed little girl, who looked scornfully at him; and beside her Reuben, leaning on his axe and roaring with laughter. He was greatly disconcerted when Marian, with sobs of disappointment, turned away, and with a world of disgust in her tones, exclaimed: —

"Why, it 's nothing but a boy!"

A few days later, Joe's mother took him to call on the mother of Marian. "I can't think," said she, "what has come over Joe lately — he 's so polite."

Joe stole a glance at Marian, caught her eye, and though he was much older than she, looked very foolish.

"And I," said Marian's mother, "can't think why Marian does n't care any more for her fairy books."

"It 's because," said Marian, with a sober little sigh, "I think there are n't any fairies any more."

WOLCOTT'S MISTAKE

Master Frederick J. Holmes, aged seven, returning from school one day late in June, found some men unloading coal at a house only two or three doors from his own. The men, who were negroes, had great pieces of burlap wrapped about their shoulders, and black ragged baskets in their hands. One, and then the other, filled his basket with coal, swung it to his shoulder, and dumped it into the window of the cellar. Fred, who was a timid, imaginative little boy, with his head full of the stories which his mother read to him out of the Arabian Nights, stopped to wonder about these big black fellows who were so marvelously strong. Of course, these were not Afrites, or genii, or cruel blacks with cimetars, — such persons, as far as he could remember, did not unload coal, — but they bore them a fascinating, slightly terrifying resemblance which held him absorbed. Then his attention was diverted by the coal

which the negroes spilled upon the sidewalk as they loaded their baskets. He began to kick it over the pavement, in huge delight to see it scatter in all directions. One of the negroes, flourishing his empty basket, plunged forward at him and shouted, "G' wa' f'm dar!"

This negro was an Afrite sure! Fred, who was in the act of picking up a piece of coal, fled with a startled cry. As he ran, the negroes set up a great shout of rich African laughter. When Fred heard it, he knew that he had been trifled with, and stopped short. "I guess mother does n't want me just yet," he said to himself; "I guess I need n't hurry." So he loitered about, just to show that he was n't afraid, and by way of daring climax, flung the lump of coal, which in his fright he had not had presence of mind enough to drop, at a neighboring lamp-post. Much to his consternation, it crashed through the glass. A policeman, loitering along further down the street, — it was Marlborough Street in Boston, — heard the noise and quickened his pace. Fred, with a vision of Afrites and policemen at his heels, ran round the corner,

down the alley way to the rear door of his father's house, past the cook, who let him in, and sought the protection of his mother, in whose lap he buried his head and sobbed. She reproved him for his thoughtless act, but so gently, he knew he had her sympathy, and was comforted.

Fred's uneasiness returned, however, when toward nightfall he heard the lamplighter — for this was before the days of electricity — express much annoyance at the condition of the lamp. The lamplighter was a red-faced, rough-bearded man to whom the cook used to threaten to give him, and whom he held in much abhorrence. Cowering below the sill of the second story window, and venturing only once in a while to peek over the window ledge, the guilty Frederick listened to the man's angry comments. The lamplighter declared he would have the boy who broke that lamp arrested at the earliest moment possible. Fred felt secure enough at the moment to note with ingenuous astonishment the stolid calm, the air of mild superior amusement, with which two street boys listened to this awful threat.

Fred's father had gone to New York on business. Mr. Wolcott Holmes, Fred's elder brother, a young gentleman who had just completed his freshman year at Harvard College, was for the time being the head of the family. When he came home, exactly at six, for dinner, he was met in the hallway by his mother, and told of Fred's misdemeanor.

"I wish I could cure him of his carelessness," said she.

Wolcott thrust his "stick," which was of the exact style which the fashion of the moment prescribed, into the porcelain umbrella-holder. His carefully chosen clothes of inconspicuous color and cut marked him as a young man with a peculiar regard for appearances. To be conspicuous was distasteful to him; to be ludicrously so would have been the keenest torture. He was all the time wondering what people were thinking of him, worrying lest some detail of his costume should not be pleasing to some critical eye among the spectators, questioning whether in such and such circumstances he had done the absolutely "correct" thing. He wanted always to be "correct;" that was, he thought,

the supreme end of a gentleman. In short, he was self-conscious, and very sensitive to ridicule.

"Fred is very young yet," he said, wondering if his mother found him dignified and sensible, "but one cannot begin too early with such a fault as carelessness."

"*You* were never thoughtless," said Mrs. Holmes.

"I 'll see if I can't think of something to suit Fred's case," said Wolcott, with a competent air.

"Well, I wish you would," answered his mother incautiously.

After dinner, Wolcott took up the evening paper. In a little while he gave a start of simulated surprise, and said to his young brother severely: —

"I see by the paper, Frederick, that you 've been in serious mischief."

"Have they got it in the paper?" said Fred, opening his eyes wide, and thinking of the broken lamp, of the lamplighter, and the policeman all at once.

"Yes," answered Wolcott, "they have. I think you 'd better hear what I find here."

"What are they going to do, 'rest me?" cried Fred.

"'Arrest,' you mean," said Wolcott. "Now, listen to what I read. 'The police of the Back Bay district have been much annoyed lately by boys breaking the glass in the street-lamps; but hitherto the culprits have escaped them. To-day, when the lamplighter arrived at the lamp-post in front of number six hundred and ninety-nine Marlborough Street, he found the glass completely shattered. He immediately notified the police, who made a vigorous search for the youthful reprobate. They did not succeed in finding him, but learned his name and residence. He is Frederick J. Holmes, of number six hundred and ninety-seven Marlborough Street. As the police are determined that lamp-breaking shall cease in this district, he will be immediately arrested, if caught.'"

Wolcott read this imaginary item with such entire gravity that poor Fred never thought of its being "made up." At its close, he burst into a wail of anguish which greatly disconcerted Wolcott, and rushed upstairs.

"How could you tell him such a story," cried his mother, rising to follow and comfort the child. "I shall undeceive him at once."

"Now, mother, don't do that!" protested the uncomfortable Wolcott, who, though he knew he had made a mistake, was prepared to argue that his blunder was wisdom. "I didn't suppose, of course, that he 'd take it so hard, or I would n't have done it. But he 'll get right over it; the fright will do him good. He won't break any more lamps."

In about an hour, Mrs. Holmes returned. "I did n't tell him," she said. "You know how sensitive the poor child is to ridicule, and how he distrusts any one who deceives him. He would resent it too much, if I told him now. But when he has forgotten a little, you must tell him, Wolcott, and get his forgiveness."

"I told him a harmless fib, for his own good," said Wolcott irritably, "and you want me to beg his pardon!"

Wolcott, the elegant and impeccable Wolcott, begging his little brother's pardon, — that seemed an impossible picture to this vain, somewhat priggish young man.

When he returned the next night, his mother called him to one side. "Do you know," she said, half amused, half indignant, " that I have n't been able to get Fred to play anywhere except in the back yard all day, and that every time he 's seen a policeman, he 's run upstairs and crawled under my bed! "

But Wolcott refused to be touched by his little brother's trouble. He shook his mother's hand from his shoulder without making any reply.

Two days later, the family left for their summer home on the North Shore. There Frederick played happily and securely, and was thought to have recovered entirely from his terror. Wolcott would gladly have let the whole matter pass into oblivion, but his mother, with gentle persistence, would remind him that he had an explanation to make.

But say what she would, he perversely insisted that what he had done was all right. He grew so touchy and sore on the subject — which was never far away from his thoughts, but stuck to him, and irritated like a burr — that his mother, divining how matters stood

with him, concluded to leave him to time and his conscience. Then, indeed, Wolcott began to acknowledge to himself that he had played his smaller brother a pretty mean trick, but tried, as people with false pride will, to find some less humiliating way than frank confession, to set himself right with his conscience. Now if there was one thing more than another which our fine young gentleman hated, it was to attend his young brother abroad. If he went with him to a matinée, for example, the child was sure to laugh out in the most inappropriate places, and attract to himself and his brother curious glances, under which the sensitive Wolcott grew most uncomfortable. "He makes a fellow look like a fool," was the way in which Wolcott expressed it. And so really he was compounding with his conscience at rather a heavy rate, when he determined to make things right with his brother by taking him to see the great pyrotechnical show called the Fall of Babylon, which was then being given in Boston; and perhaps, on the other hand, the sacrifice was not very great, for the time was the summer, and he was pretty sure not

to see at the entertainment any one whom he knew.

"Won't the policemen catch me?" asked Fred, who had not forgotten, when the proposal was made to him.

"No, no," said Wolcott, wincing at the question, and conscious, too, of his mother's significant look. "Of course not. They 've forgotten all about you by this time."

On this assurance, Fred agreed quite joyfully to go. He had implicit confidence in the wisdom and in the word of his big brother.

"And if they do see me, you won't let them catch me, will you?" he cried, with an exultant little laugh. This faith in him made Wolcott wince worse than ever; but he laughed in an embarrassed way, and told the child that he had grown so during the summer that no policeman would know him.

The splendors of the Fall of Babylon were magnificent, if not historical. The ancient city was excellently represented by massive scenery set at one end of the big field off Huntington Avenue. The spectators on the banks of seats opposite looked across an open

roped-off space to the gates of the city, the temples and palaces of which, and the magnificent hanging-gardens, rose tier upon tier behind the very solid-looking walls. The great gates were opened, and out trooped the people with dancing and music. They were gathered to welcome a general who was returning victorious. Presently, he came in his glory, mounted upon a white horse, and dressed in a rich barbaric costume. Behind him marched his army, horse and foot, and his captives loaded with chains. He dismounted, and took the seat of honor prepared for him, while all the people cheered. Girls danced before him, and sang songs written in his honor. Then there were games, — wrestling, foot races, chariot races. Suddenly a horseman dashed in. The enemy had rallied and, stronger and bolder than ever, were about to attack the city. Every one retreated behind the walls, and the great gates were closed. The enemy came. Their arrows in great flights leapt the ramparts. Huge battering-rams were run up against the walls, and threatened with their ponderous blows an immediate breach in the masonry.

Scaling-ladders were brought, too, and soldiers were soon swarming upon them. The defenders appeared on the battlements to repel the foe with javelins and Greek fire. And behold! the gates sprang open. The cavalry made a sortie, and the enemy fled. Babylon was saved! But no! Other foemen scaled the walls and applied the torch to the city. The flames leapt up, temples and palaces fell, and the show came to an end with a magnificent display of fireworks, as if not Babylon, but a factory of rockets and Roman candles, had burned.

Fred was breathless with delight. Wolcott gave the spectacle the cool approval of one who has lived long and seen much, or rather seemed so to do, for in truth he greatly enjoyed it. He told Fred, as they walked down the avenue, that historically, the show was absurd. He was greatly devoted to truth, was Wolcott, — in historical pageants.

The plan was to stay in the house on Marlborough Street that night, and return to the shore in the morning. Up four flights of stairs in the dark, deserted house was one small room which had been left furnished for

the use of Wolcott and his father, both of whom were sometimes kept late in the city. To this Wolcott and Fred repaired. Fred, excited by the show, was wakeful and frolicsome, and sorely tried the patience of his sleepy brother before finally going to sleep to dream of delectable cities which burned harmlessly down each night.

When Wolcott awoke the next morning, he raised himself upon his elbow, and looked at Fred. The child was sleeping with a smile upon his lips, and looked like a young cherub. Now, in spite of his ridiculous pride and sensitiveness, Wolcott was not a bad fellow. He liked his young brother well, and was willing to do him any kindness which cost no loss of fancied dignity, and, when no one was about, he had been known even to get down on the floor and romp with him. And now it seemed a pity to waken the boy a moment before it was necessary. In a mood of kindly indulgence, he looked at his watch. He had an early appointment that morning at Marblehead to go yachting; but he found that he had plenty of time, and determined to run out and get shaved — for Wolcott was begin-

ning really to have a beard — before waking Fred. So he slipped out of bed very carefully, and dressed as quietly as he could. Then he tiptoed out of the room, and down the uncarpeted stairways.

The front entrance to the house was through two doors, an outer and an inner, which were separated by a small vestibule. Wolcott slipped back the spring catch of the inner door, and closed it behind him. He paused in the vestibule to fumble in his pocket for the key to the outer door. Then, remembering that he had left his bunch of keys on the table upstairs, he turned to go back for them. But as he had closed and consequently locked the inner door, he found himself a prisoner.

Now Wolcott, when there was no one about whom he might suspect of poking fun at him, could exercise as much fortitude as another, and he set about waiting for his little brother to waken, patiently enough. But it must be confessed that his first thought, on looking out through the heavy panes of glass in the front door upon the boarded-up entrances and closed shutters of the houses in Marlborough Street, was one of thankfulness that all the

neighbors were out of town. He wanted no one ever to know that so stupid a thing as allowing yourself to get shut up between two doors could ever have happened to him. He could see no one in the street, a fact which at first he greeted with much satisfaction; but which, as time wore on, and his desire for release quickened, began to seem not so pleasing. Fred did not awaken, and Wolcott's watch told him that his chance of going yachting was fast disappearing. In fact, it had gone already, for he could not consent to appear in any but the correct yachting costume, and it was now too late to reach his home before going to Marblehead. But perhaps he could catch the boat at Gloucester, where he knew it intended to put in to pick up another fellow, and, as he drummed on the pane, like a child who wants to go out, but cannot because it rains, he attempted to console himself with this thought.

Now, as the drumming shows, Mr. Wolcott was beginning to fidget. But, although it was hot and close and very uncomfortable in that vestibule, there seemed no way to leave it. It was useless to pound on the inner door

and call to Fred, although he did it, for as there were two closed doors and four stories between them, Fred naturally could not hear him. The doorbell outside was unluckily not in order, and, moreover, he could n't get at it. There was plainly nothing to do but to hope that the child would soon of his own accord waken. So he paced two steps to the right, turned and paced two steps to the left, and hoped so with all his might. Then he began to worry as to what his friends would think of him if he failed to keep his engagement. He certainly should not tell them what ridiculous predicament kept him from joining them. They would have to think what they would, and probably he 'd have no more invitations from them.

Then he remembered with alarm that Fred usually had to be called at least three times in the morning, and that he had an unequaled ability to sleep late, if left undisturbed. His position began to seem to him decidedly serious. He fumed and sputtered sadly and shook the door, and shouted again and again, in temporary loss of self-control.

Finally, tired out, he sat down on the floor,

thrust his hands in his pockets, and stared at the opposite wall. When a man could do nothing else, he could show an honorable patience. It was decidedly undignified to work one's self into a fury over what could not be helped. He should lose the yachting trip, but he would be calm. That was within his power, he told himself, with shut teeth. But the wall was very uninteresting to look at, and he soon felt his resolution not to fidget slipping from him. He pulled out from his pocket two very short and dry business letters, an advertising circular, and the programme of the Fall of Babylon. Reading, he knew, was a great resource. So he read them through,— three times each,— and tried to think that he was making the time pass quickly, and that he was forgetting his surroundings. But do the best he could, the pretense struck him as thin, and very shortly he felt compelled to rise and begin pacing his cell again.

Whenever he looked out through the pane, he saw not the brick houses of Marlborough Street, but a yacht slipping through the blue water, her great white sail stiff as a board

with the freshening wind. The thought that the vestibule was quite as big, and not unlike the yacht's cabin, strangely enough did not console him. His discomfort and impatience had, in fact, grown so great that he was prepared to welcome a spectator, if the spectator would only help him to escape. That, for any one who knew Wolcott, was an exact measure of his great dislike for his quarters.

As it happened, a street-boy, a young Irishman named Teddy Maloney, loitered by at that very moment. Wolcott rapped vigorously on the glass, and felt only joy when Teddy looked up and straightway afterward mounted the steps of the Holmes mansion. Nor did Wolcott much mind the derisive smile which distorted Teddy's features, which were none too beautiful, nor the singularly displeasing white, three-cornered patch made by his nose when flattened against the pane. Wolcott's mind was upon other things than such ordinarily disturbing details.

"Go out into the street and yell 'Fred,'" he directed. "He 's up there asleep. The window 's open, and he 'll hear you. Go on; I 'll give you a quarter if you wake him."

The statement of the facts was not full, for Wolcott was excited, but to Teddy a hint was as good as a blow. The quick-witted Irish lad grasped the situation, and, a vision of small silver dancing before his eyes, sped to the street, and at the top of his lungs began to call, "Fred! Fred!"

Wolcott started to breathe a sigh of relief, but it changed into a gasp of astonishment and despair as he saw Teddy all at once take to his heels.

"Here, come back!" shouted Wolcott, in exasperation. But that was after Teddy had disappeared, and it did not do any good.

Then a policeman ran by the house at a lumbering trot. Wolcott pounded on the glass. But that was after the policeman had disappeared, and that did no good either.

Wolcott's face grew very long. Thrusting his hands deep into his pockets, — something which he never did except in moments of great mental disturbance, — he stared out into the street with gloomy eyes. He told himself that he gave up. But his eyes lit up with hope again, and his hands flew out of his pockets to beat a frantic tattoo upon the pane,

at sight of the policeman returning at a leisurely pace — without Teddy. The policeman looked up this time. Explanations followed, with the result that the officer was soon standing at Teddy's deserted post, and with hands uplifted to his mouth was calling in huge bass shouts, "Fred! Fred!"

Wolcott, as he viewed this unusual proceeding, thanked his stars again that the neighbors were away. But, unfortunately, the street was not so deserted as it looked. Servants, left in charge of houses, began to emerge from area doors with well-pleased faces, for excitements were few upon that quiet street. Much to Wolcott's annoyance, they collected in little groups and stared at the top story of the Holmes house expectantly. Wolcott groaned at sight of this "disgraceful mob," as he called it, collected before his father's respectable abode; he did not want servant maids laughing at him.

If the mob was disgraceful, it grew more so. Small boys sprang up as if by magic. The policeman instructed them to cry the sleeping Frederick's name. This struck them as amusing, and they all went at it in every

variety of key and intonation. They yelled "Fred" with a will, and diversified the exercise with catcalls, whoops, and hilarious requests to the invisible Frederick to "come off de roof." And one boy, who knew the art, put his fingers into his mouth, and whistled with great effect.

All this, of course, pleased Wolcott very much. He was still more pleased when he saw peeping circumspectly from an opposite window two young women whose good opinion he cherished, and whom he had supposed safely away for the summer. If they had to come to the city, why, oh why, he asked, had they chosen to come on that particular day? Wolcott shrank back still farther into his corner, and was almost prepared to wish that Fred might sleep until night. He ardently hoped that he might escape observation. To be seen pent up there in that ridiculous prison would be too humiliating!

But street-boys have sharp eyes. The gamins, growing tired of shouting, and looking for some less arduous amusement, spied poor Wolcott in his corner. "Git onto the dude in de windy!" cried one small imp. Imme-

diately the steps swarmed with ragged boys, who leered and jeered at him, and made him as uncomfortable as the near neighborhood of a policeman would allow. They made very rude remarks. "My, ain't he boxed up fine?" said one. "When do they feed 'im, d' y' t'ink?" asked another, speculatively. "He 's as pretty as a pictur," sang a third. "Say," said a fourth, putting his face up close to the window, "come round to de hotel, and have some quail on toast wid me!" A small boy, who had been studying Wolcott for some time with much gravity, and evidently found his hot, red, irritated face not pleasing, turned away with finely assumed disgust, and a general request to the crowd to "turn de picture to de wall." At that, Wolcott became seriously angry.

The crowd outside, too, was becoming disgustingly hilarious. Every one was smiling in high good humor over the joke of Wolcott's predicament, the nature of which had become known. They all stared at him with an unsympathetic joy that fairly maddened the young man. It was certainly a trying position, — this being put thus on exhibition,

a wholly ridiculous object shut up by his own fault in the most absurd of prisons. And the worst of it was that Fred showed no signs of waking.

Time passed with slow, deliberate pace. The crowd increased, and so did its mirth. And the policeman was growing hoarse. "Ah, say, fellers, give de cop a trochee!" called a gamin on the outskirts of the crowd, and fled precipitately. The policeman looked round angrily. The morning was hot, the back of his neck ached, and his throat was sore. He made a gesture of defeat, and seeming to take a sudden resolution, stopped his calling, and strode toward Wolcott's prison-pen. Not in the best of humors was he as he put his red face close to the door, and asked in a hoarse shout if "the kid was a deaf-mute."

Wolcott might have answered sharply, had he not been too anxious about Fred. For some time, he had felt that the boy's silence was mysterious. Enough noise had been made that morning in quiet, respectable Marlborough Street to waken a mummy in the centre of the Great Pyramid. Fred's fail-

ure to show any signs of life was unaccountable. Wolcott could not think of any way in which harm could have befallen the child; yet harm there must have been to make him so still. It was simply impossible that he should be still sleeping. The discomfort and ridiculousness of his imprisonment, the desire not to miss a pleasant yachting trip, had hitherto furnished Wolcott reasons enough for desiring his freedom. Now, when sudden terror assailed him for Fred's safety, he longed for it to seek out his brother, that he might know the worst at once.

"I 'm afraid something has happened to him," he called to the policeman.

"Ain't there somebody beside him who can get you out?"

"No; not unless you break into the house," shouted Wolcott. "But hold on, though," he added, as, in joyful afterthought, he pulled out his watch. "Yes, there is, too. Father 'll be at his office now, and he 's got duplicate keys."

Taking one of the letters from his pocket, he pulled off the envelope, and on that wrote to his father a hasty explanation of his pre-

dicament, and a request to him to come at once. He mentioned his anxiety about Fred. With infinite pains he pushed the note under the crack of the door. One of the small boys was selected as a messenger, and rushed off.

Meanwhile, what was Fred doing? Certainly much shouting had been required to disturb his sound slumbers, but he had at last partially awakened. With a vague impression that some one was calling him, he murmured a sleepy "Yes 'm," and settled himself for a new nap.

"Fred!" came the voice again in resounding bass tones. The strangeness of the voice struck his sleepy ear, and in a flash he sat upright in bed. For a moment, he did not remember where he was. Then everything came back to him, — the trip to Boston, the glorious Fall of Babylon. He turned to look at Wolcott. But Wolcott was not beside him. He was startled: Wolcott had left him alone in that big, empty house.

"Fred!" called the voice, and then other voices, which were high and shrill like the

voices of women or boys, called in chorus, "Fred! Fred!"

They seemed to be outside of the house in the street. Fred grew a little frightened with the strangeness of it all, and buried his head under the pillow. He determined to ignore the calls, not to hear them, to go to sleep again. But the frightened little boy could not help asking himself questions. Whose were the voices? How did these shouters know his name? What did they want?

"Fred! Fred!" they cried again.

He must find out who these people were, and at the thought his heart began to beat wildly. They must be bad men, — and Wolcott was gone! Nevertheless, he got out of bed and tiptoed to the window. There he put his hand on the shade and hesitated. His heart beat with great throbs; for an instant he felt dizzy. Then he summoned all his courage, and pulling the shade a little toward himself, peeked round it down into the street.

In a single swift glance, he saw the crowd of small boys, servant girls, and loafers as if in a general blur. But from this blur, one

blue figure stood out with awful distinctness, — the blue figure of a policeman! Fred remembered the broken street-lamp. He was seized with the conviction that the policeman had come to arrest him. And Wolcott was gone! Even as he looked, the terrible man, clothed in blue, helmeted, adorned with brass buttons, a huge "billy" hanging by a cord to his wrist, lifted hands to mouth, and in a bass that made the walls tremble, yelled "Fred!"

The poor boy jumped back from the window. He must get away and hide. But first he must dress. He could n't go away in his "nighty." He began to cry miserably with low, choking sobs. Seeing things indistinctly through the mist of his tears, he began very awkwardly to put on his clothes. His trembling fingers boggled badly over difficult buttons. And every now and then, the terrifying voice of the policeman thundered up at him: "Fred! Fred!"

The child began to wail pitifully, and holding up his trousers with one hand, started in what haste that dragging garment would allow to go down the rear stairs.

Mr. Holmes with the keys soon arrived in a herdic. Wolcott was liberated on the instant, and he, his father, and the policeman with one accord hurried upstairs in search of Fred. But there was no trace of him upstairs. With anxious hearts they began to look through the house. Continually calling his name, they searched each story, room by room. Wolcott, in his impatience, got ahead of the others, and found the first clue to the whereabouts of the child in the open cellar door.

"Fred!" he called, in low, anxious tones. A brief rattle of a displaced lump of coal answered him, and he jumped to the bin. Looking over the topmost boards, he saw in the dusk his little brother's white, frightened face. In another minute he had Fred in his arms.

A queer, pathetic figure truly was Fred. His soiled and rumpled clothing, his face blubbered with tears and streaked with coal dust, made him appear different indeed from his customary trig, happy self, — poor, small victim of a careless big brother's half mischievous, half well-intentioned, wholly unjustifiable deceit.

"Are they gone?" he sobbed. "Are they —the policemen gone?"

"Yes," said Wolcott soothingly, with his cheek close to the coal-stained one of his little brother.

"They won't 'rest me?"

"No," said Wolcott, beginning to understand.

"You won't let 'em take me?"

"No," said Wolcott, in grief and shame. "It was all a fib, Fred. They never wanted to arrest you. I was just fooling you. I ought not to have done it."

Just then the policeman stepped in. Fred, hardly understanding Wolcott's confession, cowered close in his arms.

"He thought that you wanted to arrest him, and ran and hid," said Wolcott to the policeman.

"Ho, ho, ho!" laughed the big fellow. "What should I want to arrest a little chap like him for?"

And if this genial speech did not entirely reassure the little boy, the sight of his father entering the door quite did away with the small remainder of his fear.